

MOTHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF HOUSING SPACE

An Analysis of 3 Married Student
Housing Sites: Eastgate, Westgate
and Peabody Terrace

by

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ABSTRACT

Mothers' Perceptions of Housing Space

What is a good housing environment for nurturing, a place where the physical environment reinforces the lives of both parents and child? This thesis looks at three married student housing sites in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in relation to these qualities, focussing on parents with children under four. Since the mother tends in these cases, to be the person usually spending most time at home with the child, it was their perceptions which were explored in detail.

Peabody Terrace was found to be by far the most satisfactory of the three environments, and this, largely because of its location and the variety of both indoor and outdoor communal places it provides. There, mother and child can be either alone or together with other mothers and children, as well as involved in neighborhood activity. Although of the three, Peabody was by far the best, it still has some very serious shortcomings. For example, there are no physical arrangements possible for different lifestyles that are needed by families with young children. If two couples wish to share childcare and eating, the physical arrangement does not facilitate this. All three buildings work on the assumption of a completely independent, nuclear family, where the question of loneliness and physical isolation, especially of the women, has not been considered.

Another important aspect, is the greater significance that the environment assumes when one spends more time at home. The qualities of comfort, visual variety, color, light, views out and personal identity, all assume greater significance. Surveilled space for child's play indoors, while parents are preoccupied with other things, such as cooking, doing the laundry, or reading, is essential, if unnecessary frustration is to be avoided. Children also learn from the environment and if, for instance, they cannot see out of their apartment, because all the windows are too high, this can be a serious inhibition. Sometimes, mothers are forced to spend a lot of time lifting the child up, allowing them the opportunity to see out.

All these simple factors being missing, surely represent the distance between the designer (usually male) and the user of the environment. Women architects and researchers could help to create and advocate more humane and rich environments for the special needs of nurturing.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND



Kitchens are not designed for mothers with babies.

Baby wants to be with mother while she is working. here they get in each others' way.

I began this thesis with the desire to further my understanding of the effects of the grouping of multi-family housing on residents' satisfaction. I was particularly interested in the design of communal space which could also be called "central space" or "interstitial space."

I began this study with some existing, intuitive ideas and prejudices about what sort of spaces worked or did not work and was interested to find out how my perceptions would differ from the resident users'. It was very interesting to find out that in fact, some of my perceptions which I had thought to be shared by certain kinds of architects only, were shared by women residents also, and to also learn that many things that I was not at all conscious of before, are major issues of concern or priority for women residents.

I thought intuitively (and rather crudely) from the beginning that Eastgate was the ugliest and most unpleasant environment to live in for a family, because of its location, lack of communal facilities and appearance, and that Peabody Terrace was the most attractive, well located and provided for. These assumptions I found to be very crudely, correct. I found, however, that the three environments have some fairly serious problems in common, which I was not previously conscious of and also they have important differences, of which I was not at all previously aware.

As soon as I became aware of the fact that one of the most important and frequent activities that takes place in



Neighbourhood around Eastgate

Taking a baby for a walk in the stroller is depressing; noise, pollution, motor cars, factories and office buildings dominate the landscape.



Eastgate Laundry

It is hard to be working here with a young child - no space to crawl around safely.

communal housing space is childrearing or mothering, I decided to focus my attention on mothers' perceptions, specifically.

I became more aware of the fact that many women with young children (especially under 4) spend a large amount, if not most of their time, in and around the house, taking care of their children and doing the housework. Some mothers do this of necessity, either because of the glaring absence of satisfactory public or communal childcare facilities, or their exorbitant costs; others choose to spend a part of, or the whole of the first 3 years of their child's life, mothering and taking care of it, full-time. They do this either because they feel other alternatives are unsatisfactory for their child, feel guilty about not being good mothers if they do not devote themselves to their child, or because they really enjoy playing this role.

At any rate, the women are not a homogeneous group, despite their social class or status, and even for those who only spend a part of their time being mothers at home, the organization of the home and its immediate surroundings can either greatly facilitate or frustrate the job of childrearing and housework. And for those who spend anything from 1 to 6 years as full-time mothers and housewives, the home and its surroundings play a critical role in their daily satisfaction and feelings of well-being.

Spending a whole day with a child and doing the housework for a nuclear family is a difficult and tedious task, especially if one is all alone with a young child, while doing it.

It is difficult, indeed, for most adults to be amused by and amuse a small child continually for from 1 to 3 years. Most women who choose to or have to do this, would like, at least to have the companionship of other adults and children while thus engaged.

I found in this study, that it is a great advantage for young mothers to live in an environment where there are a lot of other young mothers in close proximity, for the following important reasons: they immediately have something in common with the other mothers and this is a way of becoming acquainted (although children are not usually enough to sustain a friendship); they can organize babysitting pools or playgroups to create free time for themselves; they can compare notes and discuss childrearing problems and issues with other people equally concerned and interested without feeling that "all they can do is talk about children" (an often-heard comment made by adults without children, or men).

Another advantage is that in an area where there are a lot of young mothers living, there is sure always to be someone else around (on the street or block or site) to talk, to if you need or want to. If the immediate community is also homogeneous in terms of interest groups or social class, this can be an additional advantage in forming friendships. Mothers do seem to like the idea also, though, of being in a neighborhood where there are also old people and teenagers, and some mothers would prefer in addition to be able to see different types of people and activities.

Pregnancy, childbirth and childrearing are, contrary to some conventional wisdom, not found to be instinctively easy and satisfying tasks, and it is both psychologically supportive and necessary to be able to share these experiences and problems with other mothers, who are physically close by, if possible.

The reason for the proximity, is that many new mothers feel very immobile and some feel lethargic also, during the first 6 months after childbirth, and while breastfeeding. They are going through a great deal of adjustment to the new responsibility; their relationship with their husband undergoes new stresses and changes--especially for those couples who are both newlyweds and new parents.

External societal stresses and pressures tend to make it much more difficult for men to give up work time to play an equal role in childcare. In fact, these economic pressures are so strong that unless men are independently wealthy, work at home, or can make some other unusual arrangement, they have usually to be the ones to continue to compete fully in the labor market or competitive business or academic world. Libby Zimmerman in her paper, "Economics, Child Care and the Family: The Evolution of an Interdependent System," talks of the interdependence of the "expressive" or "socio-emotional" role of women in the family, as opposed to the "instrumental" tasks which the husband performs. "The woman focusses her energy on keeping the family integrated and well-functioning and is unpaid." This division of labor is seen as necessary to the perpetuation of our particular industrial system and its promise of social

mobility. She found that women who work outside of the home, in effect have 2 jobs, and a recent study showed that wives who were employed 30 or more hours a week, spend an average of 34 hours a week, in addition, on household tasks.

Zimmerman quotes Elizabeth : "Mothering is the area where any questioning of woman's role has made least impact." "The fact that the society does not provide adequate communal childcare facilities is seen to perpetuate the division of labor, the constraint of women's full participation in the paid labor market and their subsequent oppression."

Childrearing thus continues to remain largely the task of women--and the factor that ultimately continues to separate men and women from performing equally in all spheres in society. The almost unavoidable 6 years, or so, that a woman finds herself engaged in full-time or part-time, in childrearing, almost unavoidably reduces her participation in other spheres.

What role does the house or organization of housing units play in all of this? This is a very complex question, very scantily researched at this time. Some of the factors that have begun to emerge in my research are the relationship between the "independent", single-family, low density, suburban house and the role of women. Many mothers I have talked to have mentioned the disadvantages of the suburban home for childrearing because of the lack of communal space and proximity of other mothers to form play groups and babysitting pools, etc. In some cases, the disadvantages of physical "independence" or isolation, can be partially overcome by paying large sums of

money for live-in, substitute mothers, professional playgroup organizers or expensive private schools or daycare facilities which take children from a very young age.

Even then, the low density and separation of land uses still requires that the mother play the coordinating role of childrearing--fetching and carrying children to school, dressing and feeding them. I have been told by women living in high-income suburbs, that some of them spend most of their day fetching and carrying their children to various schools and extracurricular activities, because there is no public transportation in rich neighborhoods.

The housing unit on the other hand, in a high-density situation, has very definite advantages for childrearing, if it can be properly programmed and designed. There can be a large number of other mothers living in close proximity and the kind of communal facilities that this number of people can support is much greater. Nursery schools, playrooms, playgrounds, laundries, common rooms, lounges and sports facilities can all be on site, saving time and effort for mothers.

So very much has been written recently about the disadvantages of family living in apartment units off the ground. It seems possible from my observations to overcome some of these, at least for middle-income families. In fact, many of the mothers I interviewed felt that they did not suffer at all from apartment living and in fact found it to be safer in the city, to have better views, less noise, and most importantly, the possibility of many communal spaces, facilities and other



Westgate Open Space

"When mothers take their children out, it is to the playground, and they are then confronted with other mothers."

This asphalt pathway around the sunken playground is a good circuit to push a carriage on and for children to ride their tricycles, with the chance of bumping into other children and mothers and making friends.

women close by. The major problems are the lack of semi-private indoor and outdoor spaces above ground level where children can play and other people be seen casually as on a street. Low rise, high density units seem like an alternative.

It seems possible that the lack of "childproof" (i.e., safe) space could be provided in high rise by means of the very successful interconnecting, partially-enclosed balconies (e.g., Peabody Terrace) and bright, surveilled, wide hallways (with places for things to grow and children to play in) that apartments actually look onto. Views of green and people on these "streets" or perhaps, better still, but hardly yet experimented with, clusters off the ground, are possible solutions. Noise of adjacent units and people on accessways must be reduced by proper insulation (carpeting, cork, etc.). Doors onto these spaces must be designed so that young children can open them, but also not be able to go into elevators or staircases, up or down.

Reasons for choosing these particular sites

I chose these three sites for study because they were accessible to me both socially and physically. The women were willing participants in the study and did not feel threatened, exploited, or inconvenienced. I felt that they enjoyed giving me some of their time, they were so responsive and helpful.

In addition, it seemed more likely that I would be able to generate some improvements and action in a community of which I was a part than if I had been studying another situa-

tion, into which I have no entre. I hoped to be able to contribute something to one or more of the projects if possible.

I did find that I was able to begin to organize and mobilize some people on the MIT campus to do something about needed information, counselling and group formation in Eastgate and Westgate.

It seems possible that the Open House previously held specifically for foreign wives will now include American women, A New Parents' group dealing with problems of Child Development, Husband/Wife roles, etc. will be started with meetings in the buildings themselves, an information sheet for women and mothers will be distributed to newcomers, and various small women's groups will be started in Eastgate and Westgate perhaps initiated by a welcoming party for women in each building.

Description of the Sites and Methodology

I chose three married student housing sites in Cambridge in order to be able to compare their physical differences and attributes. They all have at least one highrise building and the study was focused on apartments in the highrise only. The differences in the three projects, however, are not only in the detailed design and groupings of units in the towers, but in the outdoor and indoor communal facilities provided on the sites. Two of the projects, i.e., Westgate and Peabody Terrace, consist of high and low-rise apartments, the low-rise defining semi-private, communal outdoor spaces.

All three sites are located very close to the Charles River, two of them in fact face directly onto Memorial Drive (a parkway running adjacent to the river), and Eastgate is separated from the river by 1 block of MIT academic buildings.

Methodology

I used a multiple technique approach, to gain as much understanding of these environments and possible improvements as possible, focusing all the time on the mothers' point of view. The techniques I used were the following:

1. Observation of activities and individuals or groups of adults or children on the site in different weather conditions and at different times of day and week. I began the study in mid-winter and continued into the warmer, spring weather, so had a range of conditions.

2. Observation of objects or other indications of use or misuse of parts of the site.
3. Informal interviewing of mothers in communal spaces of the sites.
4. More structured in-depth interviews of three mothers in each of the three buildings. These interviews usually lasted a whole morning or afternoon and I went back in most cases for further information. I taperecorded and transcribed the main bulk of these interviews.
5. Interviews with the architects of Peabody and Eastgate (Westgate architect was unavailable).
6. Interviews with MIT Housing Office and site manager in Eastgate.
7. Interviews with Resident Counsellor in Peabody, Westgate Tenants Association secretary, and Eastgate Tenants Association members.
8. Informal meetings and discussions concerning improvements at Eastgate and Westgate with the following people: Dr. Merton Khan, Head, Psychiatry, MIT; Charlotte Schwartz, social planner, Medical Department, MIT; Margaret Sand, Child Care Office; Dexter, Housing Office; Pat Plummer, Tech Wives; Ruth Stump and Cathy DeJong, Eastgate and Westgate residents.
9. I spent a typical day on the site with a number of the mothers, observing their activities and use

of the space, talking about it, photographing and 15
filming interesting aspects.

10. We held an evening party cum slide-show for some of the mothers from each site who explained their homes to each other and discussed problems and solutions they have in common. We recorded this evening to make the slide-tape to be shown to architects and mothers.
11. Selected reading on Children's Play, Child Development, Environmental Psychology, and recent Multi-story Housing Developments.
12. Feedback from and discussions with my advisors, Kevin Lynch

MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings of this study can be divided into the following 3 categories:

1. Problems related to Family Life, the Role of Women and Student Life
2. Problems traceable to the Physical Environment
3. Problems traceable to Social Organization, Information, Communications and Management

To some extent these three are all interconnected and part of the same "seamless web". For the purposes of isolating sub-areas for action, contributing to or changing the whole, the subdivision into categories is useful. However, for a building to work as a whole for a group of people, all three aspects must be equally taken into account. The problems within each of these three areas can be summarized as follows:

1. Problems relating to Family Life, the Role of Women and Student Life

There are some specific problems which this particular group of women experience, because of the fact that they are the wives of students. These are:

- 1.1 The feelings of transience and impermanence created by relatively short term residence on the university campus (periods of 1 to 5 years).
- 1.2 A lack of commitment to, fear of, or unwillingness to "become involved" or to expend time and effort on the local physical or social environment, because of this feeling of impermanence.

- 1.3 Husbands under very great work stress and anxiety because of the intense academic pressures, spending as a result, much less leisure time at home with the family. Some children are practically parented by mothers only, and some women feel as if they hardly have a spouse, since they see him so infrequently.
- 1.4 The stresses of academic life also create intense internal conflicts between the majority of relatively recently-married parents (when they do get to see each other).
- 1.5 Many students are temporarily poorer than they have ever been, or probably will ever be again. They are cut off from parental support and yet do not have an equivalent source of support. Their standard of living is much lower than it has ever been and they are not really experienced or equipped to make the best of the less luxurious residential environment and available resources. (Hearing their complaints I could not help but compare them with people from a more permanently low income situation. On the one hand, I feel that the facilities would be much more appreciated and utilized, but also their inadequacies more intensely felt, because this might be seen as a long term or permanent stop.)
- 1.6 The fact that they are students at prestigious universities makes their perception of their future housing situation fairly optimistic, although the lack of certainty about where in the United States they might be, causes some anxiety. On the one hand, they know that this is

only a temporary situation and that the future will be more affluent and comfortable. On the other hand, some become attached to this housing environment where significantly for them, there are a lot of other women with young children in similar situations. They fear the prospect of leaving, moving and starting again in an unknown place, where the problems of meeting similar people might be even harder, and the communal facilities, and possibilities for forming playgroups and babysitting pools, fewer.

- 1.7 The women generally seem to bear more of the burden of the families' temporary poverty than the men. It seems to be fairly generally still believed that their present difficulties and sacrifices for the sake of their husband's education will be well compensated for and worthwhile in the longer term. There is an almost puritanical acceptance of present sacrifice and hardship of the mother and child in the present, for the future benefit, supposedly of the whole economic unit. Some women have visions of the large, dreamhouse in plenty of green suburban grounds, as the not-too-distant future step, although some are consciously worried about possibly even more isolation there, than in the higher density situation here. Since full time mothers and housewives spend so much time around the house, it is of much greater importance that it be properly designed for them, than in other cases, where it used less and is less critical.

1.8 Childrearing and housekeeping responsibilities are still left largely to the women. Non-student, middle and upper-middle income families can afford different degrees of household help, as well as being able to put the children in expensive private schools, family day-care programs or playgroups with paid, professional babysitters. However, even in these situations, there are still many tasks and duties such as fetching and carrying children from school, etc., which are ultimately left to the women. The reason is, that the young men feel they have to be able to expend their major energies in competing fully in the business or professional world to "establish themselves", and the competitive work-world does not yet take into account family life and the changing role of women. Non-student housing environments are also not considered or designed for the problems of communal childrearing and housework, in the sense that single-family houses on large low density suburban lots in suburbs where land uses are carefully segregated assume independent nuclear family units, relying heavily on the motor car and telephone for communication between people and institutions, and either the wife or full-time servants to take care of the large house and land. Affluent women in areas such as Cambridge try many different arrangements, such as having the top floor of a large house rented to tenants (built-in babysitters who possibly do housework too, in exchange for rent), live-in guests who can be substitute, extended family members, baby-

sitters, and help with housekeeping, to slightly more radical, communal efforts, such as communal family arrangements where 2 or 3 couples will share one building, meals, babysitters, housekeepers, etc. There is a great deal of experimentation, trial and error going on at this time, and by no means any clear-cut solutions, but certainly, a good deal of hesitation about the single family suburban alternative, previously the more readily accepted norm.

1.9 Some women accept this role of being full-time mother and housewife (or house-manager in an affluent household), leaving other kinds of competitive work and economic achievement to the men. Some feel guilty about being "unproductive" and often very lonely and cut-off from other women and children in the suburbs. Those that are, on the other hand, trying to do work other than child-care and housework, feel guilty and torn because child-care facilities are still inadequate and inaccessible to them.

1.10 This stage of nuclear family life is fraught with additional emotional and psychological adjustments and other problems created by the new, additional responsibility of taking care of a third person. In addition, most newly-weds experience many difficulties of adjustment to each other.

- 1.11 Most new parents do not seem to have sufficient knowledge of, or information about, child development. They are frequently separated from the advice and experience of their parents and feel a lack of knowledge and supportive advice and counselling.
- 1.12 Apparently, many women still seem to feel that their emotional problems are very personal ones and are not yet conscious of depression, loneliness, isolation and frustration as being more general problems shared with many other women at this stage of life.
- 1.13 Many women who have become more conscious of their situation, feel guilty and trapped, do not know of alternatives or cannot change their husbands' attitudes and roles. Many are currently trying to arrange more reciprocal arrangements, where both parents share more equally in childcare and housework, but feel strong outside social pressures working against them. They see the feminist movement as being far too radical for them and are lethargic and resist forming women's groups to deal collectively with their problems.

I have been very interested to find out whether there are any aspects of the physical design of their housing units, their groupings and the communal facilities that are provided, that contribute to or lessen these above-mentioned problems.

2. Problems traceable to the Physical Environment

My findings were that the physical environment does in fact play a very significant role in resident satisfaction. The aesthetic appearance of the apartments, internal and external spaces and forms contribute equally to feelings of satisfaction, as do the more directly utilitarian or functional aspects. There are noticeable differences in the 3 environments which can be attributed to the physical design differences and these are of significance for the designer. These findings are discussed and illustrated in much greater detail in Part 3, since this was a major emphasis and concern of the research. Following is a summary of the problems.

2.1 Social Problems traceable to the physical environment

2.2 Child rearing and Housework Problems

2.3 Child Development Problems

2.4 Psychological Problems

2.1 Social Problems

2.1.1 In almost all of the mothers' perceptions, the lack of a variety of adequate, informal meeting places and playspaces both outdoors and especially indoors, seems to strongly inhibit the initial and subsequent fact-to-face contact in the right kinds of spaces, necessary to get to know other people. Lobbies and hallways are sterile, cold, unwelcoming, have no windows looking onto them, places to sit and in two cases, no natural light. Laundries, common rooms, playrooms, playgrounds, etc. are sterile, cold, un-

comfortable and inadequately designed and organized as places to meet informally or be with children, especially in colder weather (a very large portion of the year in this region).

2.1.2 In two of the buildings, the physical environment of the immediate surroundings is very hostile to mothers with young children. Traffic, factories, noise, pollution and crime prevent mothers and children from taking the desired, frequent neighborhood strolls, where people and activities can be seen in the streets.

2.2 Childrearing and Housework Problems

2.2.1 Keeping the apartment clean is made difficult, or additional housework created by design details such as light, porous, linoleum floor finishes, kitchen walls without washable tiles, incinerators blowing dirt into, instead of out of, apartments, etc.

2.2.2 Lack of adequate storage in most rooms, means that it is difficult to keep a small space uncluttered, especially with children's toys and equipment. High storage out of children's reach is also an essential, often lacking.

2.2.3 Staircases to apartments, long distances between elevators and apartment entrances and uncovered access from parking to building entrances make carrying groceries, laundry, and baby more tedious.

2.2.4 Problems of childrearing are increased by safety issues

such as dangerous, all-metal stove tops, which children²⁵ can reach, linoleum-covered, concrete floor surfaces, which are dangerous for children to fall onto, etc.

2.2.5 Staircases to apartments and long distances between elevators and apartment entrances make carrying heavy groceries, laundry, baby and baby equipment more tedious.

2.2.6 Lack of adequate storage for bulky items frequently used, such as bicycles, tricycles and carriages, means that they have to be carried up to the apartment, cluttering it even more.

2.2.7 Lack of adequate indoor and outdoor play spaces, close to the unit, increases the time spent amusing and watching a child.

2.2.8 Inadequate sound insulation between apartments (floor or walls) or apartment rooms, causes parents to have to restrict a child's play and accompanying noise, because of neighbors' complaints or fathers' need to study. Inadequately insulated hallways, means that they cannot be used for children's play in winter time, especially because of the noise disturbance and this is a further hindrance for parents.

2.2.9 Unsafe play equipment in playrooms and playgrounds make supervising play much more time and energy consuming, as parents have to be constantly on guard.

2.3.0 Conflicts between bored children in inadequately equipped playspaces create additional work for supervising mothers

and frustration for children.

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- 2.3.1 Lack of visual connection between kitchen and living-room makes contact between mother and child more difficult.
- 2.3.2 Small kitchens, where children cannot be fed or play while a parent works there, increases household cleaning, because of the mess created by feeding in the livingroom, and conflicts when a parent is alone in the apartment working in the kitchen and the child wishes to be there too.
- 2.3.3 High windows which children cannot reach up to, to see out, means that a parent has constantly to be lifting up a child to see out or watching that it does not climb furniture and fall out of a high window.
- 2.3.4 Outdoor spaces without childproof fences, or balconies without adequate railings, are unusable, except for constantly on-the-guard parents, making the variety of usable spaces for parent and toddler more limited.
- 2.3.5 Lack of childproof balconies in apartments, means that parents have to always accompany a child downstairs and outside to the playground.
- 2.3.6 Lack of sufficient or adequately organized private apartment space, inhibits privacy between parents and child, creating conflicts between them. An important question is where does the child play while the student studies or vice versa?

2.4 Psychological problems and Physical Design

2.4.1 The lack of an identifiable apartment unit in a huge apartment block, makes people express feelings of loss of identity, individuality and uniqueness. When all the apartments look the same inside and out, there is created a feeling of being just one tiny, unidentifiable unit, in a larger impersonal unit. Restrictions on hanging things on walls for personal decoration and identity; all-white apartments with square rooms and no variety of shapes, unexpected corners, alcoves or niches, all contribute to feelings of anonymity and lack of control over one's personal space.

2.4.2 Hard, cold finishes such as concrete walls, linoleum floors and dark blue bricks; lack of bright, light colours and warmer materials make common spaces and private spaces feel dead and "not like home". The lack of growing things, especially evergreens in winter, greatly contributes to the general feeling of sterility. Wood, warm red bricks and tiles, a "lush, vegetated look", coloured walls and floors, alcoves, windowboxes, bay windows and windowseats are alternatives mentioned as being more pleasing.

2.4.3 Rooms which are designed so that there is only one possible arrangement of furniture also restricts variety and creative participation of the user.

2.4.4. Lack of natural light and pleasant views (of people and growing green) create feelings of claustrophobia and

isolation.

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3. Problems traceable to Information and Communications, Social Organisation and Management and Project Programming

3.1 Information

New residents in an apartment complex need information on how to live comfortably and safely in the buildings. Orientation and basic information on arrival are essential and where these do not exist many problems arise with garbage disposal, fire escapes, laundromats, etc. Not only do people need a basic manual on how the building works, but also a guide on how to furnish and arrange the apartment and communal spaces; what some options are of subdividing the spaces, etc. Illustrations of found objects for playrooms and playgrounds, tenants arrangements and furnishing of the spaces should be included. The easiest and best ways of taking care of the spaces should be described in a written manual both for residents and managers and feedback is necessary to the architect for future reference. In all 3 buildings, residents experience difficulties and problems because of the lack of adequate and imaginative guidance on use of the apartment and building complex.

3.2 Physical Problems relating to resident committees and Management Communication

3.2.1 There are problems of different attitudes of management and residents to maintenance of communal spaces for mothers

and children. In the case of Westgate, found play objects in playgrounds are understood to be garbage by janitors; newly mown grass and fallen leaves, both very good for play, are quickly disposed of, as garbage. A lack of adequate communication between residents and janitors apparently exists. The Westgate lounge and laundry on the other hand, are extremely dirty and uncared for, and the reason given is the low budget. Residents who use the lounge in Eastgate, on the other hand, for large gatherings, have to take responsibility for its maintained cleanliness with a \$30.00 deposit as security and this is a way of ensuring correct use. What seems to work fairly well, is for a representative group of residents to take responsibility with janitors for use and care of communal spaces, such as playrooms, playgrounds and lounges. There is sometimes conflict, though, on these committees between childless families and those with children. If mothers and children do not make sure that they are adequately represented on tenants' committees, they often get out-voted on issues of concern to them, such as allocation of budgets available for residents' use and possible uses of spaces for children. Very few people attend tenants' committee meetings generally, unless a major issue emerges, although tenants do seem to respond to committee-initiated questionnaires. These questionnaires could be followed by ballot sheets to all residents on issues. The high turn-

over of residents, means that new chairmen of committees have to be elected each year, with the result that there is a lack of continuity of effort. A resident counsellor in Peabody Terrace reduces this problem to some extent, although being hired by the Housing Office means that it is difficult to represent tenants when there are issues of conflict with management. The resident counsellor, it seems, needs to be financed by another department of the university, such as the Dean's Office, Graduate Council, or Psychiatry and Social Work Department. The lack of continuity seems to be one of the major problems in getting things done, since each small change takes a great deal of time. The case of the residents' need for a fence around the Westgate playground is a clear example. This issue had to be pursued for at least 1 full year, before the MIT management was convinced that it was essential for it to find the money to spend on this basic requirement for children's safety and mothers' sanity. Few transient residents are prepared to put in all the required effort to get simple necessities like this one.

3.3 Social Problems traceable to Communications and Organizations

New residents need counselling and information on the social resources and facilities available to them on the campus and in the building. However, this information needs to come in come in a very personal form by means of,

for example, a personal counsellor, phonecall, or letter. Large gatherings or parties are usually not very successful to meet new people and get needed information, although smaller, more intimate ones held in the buildings itself might be. There is some information that can be conveyed reasonably in written form, such as a simple listing of available resources (see Appendix), preferably made up by the residents themselves for other residents. In the warmer weather, people seem to get to know each other more easily via the children, outside in the playgrounds, but as soon as winter sets in, this casual face-to-face contact ceases, unless there are well-equipped, comfortable indoor spaces to replace the ones outdoors and in which to continue this form of casual contact. People frequently say, that if you arrive late, when the weather is cooler, it is extremely difficult to get to know anyone and people are very unfriendly in the unfriendly hallways. Other ways of knowing at least a little about your neighbors are via a local directory such as the Peabody 500, which lists all residents, their place of birth and previous residences, professions or occupations, education and name and ages of children. This would help, immediately, to know of any other mothers on your floor, or whom to contact to start a playgroup for children of your child's age or to start or join a babysitting pool.

A resident's newsletter is another useful way of conveying information, giving a sense of community and a

voice to current and common issues and problems. The Peabody Press seems to have reappeared again after disappearing for a few years. What is needed, is a concerned editor and eager and personal contributors to keep it going.

I have already mentioned the resident counsellor family living in Peabody, supposedly accessible for advice and help. Apparently, because Peabody does not have a Tenants Association all problems (mechanical, economic and social) are brought to the counsellor family who as a result, has barely enough time and energy to deal at least with the mechanical problems. Previous residents (or alumni) if they are still around the Cambridge area, possibly could be persuaded to periodically be available to counsel new residents.

Resident women join or form themselves various kinds of groups to do certain activities and deal with various problems, but there certainly is not enough of this kind of thing happening, for the intensely expressed need. The need ranges from women who simply want to be able to talk to other women on a regular, informal basis about general topics and personal problems, women needing information and advice about parenthood, child development, husband/wife roles and expectations, part-time or full-time employment opportunities, study opportunities, career guidance, etc. In some cases, small groups of 6 or 8 women could cover some of these topics at different times

as they need; but there is definitely a need also, for a regular women's group to meet in the buildings themselves to discuss various topics and do various things together, especially in winter time. The Harvard Dames meets in Peabody Terrace once a week, but some women feel that they are a very conservative group and there is a definite need for other kinds of groups also.

There are many women on the two campuses who are concerned with these problems who are willing to participate and help in projects to help mothers living in the buildings. What is needed is a greater consciousness of their needs and problems and organization to bring them to the buildings.

Another important way of women helping each other with common problems in these buildings is through the formation of self-help groups. I know of a number of such groups that have been formed by the women themselves for social intercourse and to help each other to deal with their problems and questions. Again, this is a potential area that has been only very limitedly developed.

3.4 Problems traceable to Project Programming

Probably the most serious problem with all three projects was the exclusion of the users or similar users from the programming and design process. The misfits that have resulted are less critical here than in the case of

buildings designed for lower-income people, where slender economic margins make adaptations even more difficult, and the professionals are even further removed from the users in experience, values and knowledge.

Even in these three cases, however, the designers' and planners' assumptions about user attitudes to family life, childrearing practices, social life and aesthetics are seriously off the mark. Social, utilitarian and aesthetic problems have resulted, which certainly could have been avoided had the users been consulted and better known.

In a recent letter to the Boston Globe a young mother wrote,

"Few Mothers are Architects

Dear Diapers n' Dungarees: Maybe more mothers should become architects as the men certainly don't have us in mind when they plan buildings."

COMPARATIVE SATISFACTION

Comparative Overall Satisfaction with the Environment

From the detailed interviews as well as many informal talks with other women living in Eastgate, Westgate and Peabody Terrace, I have come to the conclusion that overall satisfaction with the site is much higher in Peabody Terrace than Eastgate or Westgate. The general attitude of the respondents was much more enthusiastic and positive about the environment, and this can best be felt if the whole detailed interview is read. I have, however, tried to isolate those factors that are different about Peabody Terrace that were brought up by the respondents as being most important for their feelings of satisfaction.

1. Physical/Environmental Factors

1.1 Communal, Outdoor Spaces

Peabody Terrace has the largest, most varied (in appearance, landscaping and activities) public and semi-private open spaces. These spaces are informal meeting and playspaces for the mothers and children. Because there is a choice of different spaces to go to, some of the conflicts that occur in Eastgate and Westgate between children and mothers do not occur in Peabody Terrace. It seems as if this is because there is a variety of places to go to, so that everyone does not get crowded together in one inadequate space. Mothers in Eastgate and Westgate mentioned the problems of conflicts in the play areas. In Eastgate, this was in the playroom and in Westgate in the playground. The Eastgate playground does not even have



Peabody

any benches or seats for mothers to sit on and the one grassed area provided there, does not have a fence around it, so it is not used at all by mothers and children. As can be seen in the illustrations, this grassed area is surrounded by heavily trafficked streets and is a dangerous place to be in with children. It is not even the type of place that a person would go to to be alone without children, because it is also completely unprotected from the wind. The Eastgate Playground is used every day by the MIT Nursery School which is housed in the mezzanine floor of the building. It seems as if this playground has not really been designed for the mothers with small children who live in the building, unless their children go to the nursery school, since there is nowhere for them to sit down in the playground. The one other outdoor communal space in Eastgate, is the roof terrace, opening off the playroom and laundry. When it is warm and sunny this one space is used by everyone in the building for sunbathing. This terrace has a hard, brick floor and has not been designed for children. Equipment such as a sandbox and climbing frame could not be put up here because the children's play would conflict with the other residents' use. There is one tiny patch of grass in front of Eastgate between the sidewalk and the building, that I have occasionally seen a mother and small child sitting on. The mother has to be constantly on the watch that the child does not crawl or walk into the street, so they do not tend to stay here for very long. Westgate is much better provided with usable outdoor space than Eastgate, but still is inadequate. The build-

dings enclose a large semi-private court in which there is a playground. This playground is very heavily used in the spring and summer and on warmer winter days. The whole courtyard is enclosed by a fence, so that the children cannot run out into the surrounding streets. The playground is divided from the rest of the court area by being on a lower level. It is depressed into the ground by about 5 or 6 feet of sloping grassed banks. Around the playground area is an asphalt path heavily used as a tricycle route and by mothers wheeling carriages. The flat areas between the asphalt path and the buildings have a couple of good climbing and shade trees growing on them, as well as some benches and grassed areas. All these spaces are heavily used by many children and mothers, but since there is really not enough creative play equipment in this area, or more particularly, there are no subareas for children of different ages, there is a lot of conflict here between children, and as a result, their mothers. There is no other place to go to on the site with a toddler, because the grassed open space on the other side of the tower is not enclosed by a fence, and there is a real danger of children walking directly onto the freeway.

Peabody Terrace has the following open spaces: a fenced tot-lot, a fenced playground, 2 semi-private courtyards with trees, a semi-public central brick courtyard, a small fenced grass area with one climbing frame in it, a paved terrace opening off the common room, and a number of roof terraces with a wooden deck and planted areas on them. It is possible to take a very pleasant walk around the site stopping for varying



The grassed, sloping courtyard and brick courtyard are two of the series of outdoor spaces that a mother can go to with a child on a daily walk around the Peabody site - mother/child circuit.
Peabody Terrace



periods in these different spaces, meeting with other people, watching activities or just being alone.

1.2 A second reason for greater satisfaction in Peabody Terrace seems to be that it has the most pleasant and varied indoor communal spaces where people can go in the winter, especially. Peabody has a large, fairly well-equipped playroom on the ground floor opening onto the brick courtyard, a large well-furnished function room with its own ground floor level enclosed patio, 3 small seminar or study rooms, small study areas off the laundries and small places where the 4th and 6th floor corridors join the 2 towers. Because the towers and the low-rise are connected at the 4th and 6th floors, it is possible to go for walks along the corridors stopping at these small places where the corridor widens, to enjoy the views out. The corridors are single loaded and have large areas of glazing on one side so that walking along the corridors affords very good views of the courtyards, neighborhood and city. Another indoor access space is the basement tunnel connecting all the Peabody buildings. Some women are afraid to use it, since it is not surveilled or very well lit, but some apparently do use it especially in the winter. Eastgate has the following indoor communal spaces: a very large function room with a panoramic view of the city, a small playroom and a study room, all on the top floor of the building. Westgate has only a function room in the basement, which has no natural light or view out.

The greater number and variety of indoor places to go to

in Peabody Terrace seems to make the mothers feel less cramped and trapped in their private apartments than they do in Eastgate and Westgate.

1.3 The appearance of the Peabody Terrace site with its grass, trees, brick paving, spots of bright color on the facades, shapes of the buildings, and views of the river and neighboring residential streets was much preferred to the aesthetic qualities of the Westgate and Eastgate sites as a whole.

1.4 The appearance of the surrounding neighborhood also had an impact on overall residential satisfaction. It is much more pleasant and interesting to walk around the Peabody site since it is in an attractive residential neighborhood. People are on the streets and front porches, there are trees and flowers and small neighborhood and specialized stores. Eastgate and Westgate, on the other hand, are in industrial areas with heavily trafficked streets immediately adjacent to the sites. Westgate, however, does have the green MIT playing field on one side which is very much appreciated by the residents. Mothers with small children like to be able to go for a pleasant walk around the neighboring blocks and see activity and people of different ages.

2. Communications

2.1 Peabody Terrace is the only one of the 3 sites that has a women's group meeting regularly in the on-site function room, to which all resident women can go. This group is the Harvard Dames which has its weekly activities and events on the Peabody site. There is always something to go to, each week, if women are interested. MIT's Tech Wives and the Women's Forum hold their meetings in a central place on the MIT campus which is unfortunate, since many mothers feel immobile and would go much more readily to an on-site activity. Decentralization possibilities for these groups and the formation of local groups will be discussed in more detail later on.

2.2 Peabody residents also have organized a newsletter called the Peabody 500 with resident contributors. This is another attempt to communicate that neither Eastgate nor Westgate residents have tried. Also, when new residents arrive in Peabody they receive the Peabody 500 which is a local telephone directory. It not only gives phone numbers and addresses, but also the occupation and background of the tenants plus the ages of their children. Neither Westgate nor Eastgate have these publications.

2.3 Peabody Terrace has a resident counselor family to advise students on any problems they might have in living here. The one advantage of the counselor family is that they live in Peabody for longer periods than the average resident and therefore can give some feeling of continuity to, for instance,

tenant/management relations. Eastgate and Westgate have Tenants Associations with elected chairmen, who unfortunately are as transient as the residents themselves.

Comparative Overall Satisfaction with the Apartment Itself

From the detailed interviews it seemed that the Peabody Terrace residents are more satisfied with their apartments than either the Eastgate or Westgate residents for the following reasons:

1. The kitchens in the apartments of residents interviewed were large spaces, with enough room for a diningroom table and high chair for a child. The kitchens also have natural light and ventilation and a good view to the outside. They are visually connected to the livingroom area, but this connection is the dining area of the kitchen, rather than the work area. The kitchens are also large enough to put in a washing machine and dryer or a dishwasher, which was very much appreciated. The kitchens also have a large pantry area. They are safe for children to be in. In Eastgate and Westgate the kitchens have no natural light or ventilation and there is no view to the outside. They are also unsafe for children in Eastgate, since the whole stovetop is made of metal which gets very hot and is at a height that small children can touch. In Westgate, to reach some of the closets, it is necessary to reach over the gas burners and this is dangerous and awkward for mothers.

2. All apartments in Peabody Terrace get cross ventilation and this is much appreciated, especially in the summertime when the cooling river breezes are picked up. In both Eastgate and Westgate, there is no cross ventilation and it is necessary to own an air conditioner. The sun louvres in Peabody Terrace

reduce the direct sunlight minimizing the need for air-conditioning.

3. The apartments in Peabody Terrace have light on two sides adding a feeling of spaciousness to a small space. Peabody residents say they appreciated the feeling of spaciousness and light in such a small space. In Westgate all light comes from one side and in Eastgate there is light from 2 sides but is is 2 adjacent sides rather than 2 opposite ones, as in Peabody.

4. In Peabody, every apartment has 2 pleasant floor to ceiling views out; one side looks onto a green court and the other looks onto a brick paved court. In Eastgate, the views out are onto heavily trafficked streets, parking lots and industrial areas. Only one side of the 4 sided building looks onto the river. In Westgate, one side looks onto the playground which is pleasant in the foreground, but the further views are of factories and large electric billboards. Again, only one side looks onto the river.

5. Peabody apartments have large areas of built-in storage space in the apartments. Many of the window walls have built-in open shelves and a desk. There is a large closet in the lobby and the kitchen has a large pantry. Storage is very inadequate in Westgate and fairly adequate in Eastgate.

6. Many of the Peabody apartments have a balcony opening off the livingroom. This is much appreciated for children's play, sitting out and hibachi cookouts.

7. Many of the Peabody apartments have 1 wall painted in a primary color adding warmth to the otherwise white apartments. The Westgate and Eastgate units are completely white and felt to be very sterile and cold.

Conclusion

The indoor and communal facilities, their appearance, variety, and accessibility seem to play a major role in determining mothers' satisfaction in all 3 environments. Specific details of the apartment design are an additional factor in overall satisfaction. Factors relating to feelings of spaciousness and light versus feelings of being cramped and closed in are frequently mentioned, as well as the importance of colour and warmth, which may be given by views out of trees or grass, or inside the apartment by coloured finishes.

THE FINDINGS

1. Isolation and Loneliness
2. Neighborhood
3. Communal Outdoor Spaces
4. Entrance Lobbies
5. Playrooms
6. Laundries and Utility Spaces
7. Lounges
8. Hallways
9. Kitchens
10. Livingrooms
11. Views
12. Balconies
13. Floors
14. Sensory Quality

Isolation and Loneliness, a Major Issue

The general theme of loneliness and isolation in the midst of potential friends is a frequently brought up problem in these environments. The women who work outside of the house seem to feel it less, probably because of the human contacts and friendships they form at work. They are not as dependent on the local environment for friendships as the women whose life is centred around child rearing and housework (either by choice or necessity.)

The isolation seems to be attributable to both the physical and social environments, the groupings of apartment units being a very important factor. It seems as if the lack of adequate, semi-private communal spaces isolates neighbours from one another. In Peabody Terrace, the adjacent balconies which can be linked together by opening up the wooden partitions dividing them, serve as a small communal social space for children and parents, but this is the only example of such a space in the three towers. It seems as if the whole notion of clusters or cluster housing in highrise is as important as in low-rise. In fact it is even more critical, since in low-rise situations, the access street can often fulfill this function.

"If neighboring were easier, like on a street with a backyard fence, it could maybe be different. Here there is just the lobby, the corridor. People move through it very quickly, and they are very suspicious if you don't have your key in the entrance. The only place where you get that effect here, is the playroom." Eastgate

"I would love to sit on the stairs of my apartment and watch people going by outside, and sit and play with the child."
Eastgate

"Any other problems in the building that you think of?
I think people in this building are very unfriendly--every-
one says it. There is no communication between apartments. We
only know our 1 next door neighbor, because they are the only
ones we see all the time. The building is built so that
you only see one other apartment, that's all. It's really very
private and quiet, but there is no social communication."
Peabody

The insulated, private, apartment units with no outlook
onto a semi-private communal, space seem to reinforce the isola-
tion of women in the nuclear family as well as reducing the
possibilities for neighboring children to play together outside
the home.

"What do you most dislike about the apartment?
I think the isolation of it, from everyone else. You
are just sort of in a little box. You look out, but just onto
roofs; not very much people-to-people contacts." Eastgate

"Yes, I don't know what to pin it on, because everybody I
have talked to says just the same thing, "it's so impersonal,
I just don't know anybody here," and I don't know if its actu-
ally the building, or what. All the place we have to meet here
is the playground and the grass. I really believe in the low
rise they do get to know each other better because they sort of
open out onto the playground." Westgate

Various "street in the air" projects or apartment build-
ings with wide access galleries on which there are sometimes
sandpits, barbeque places, small front porches, etc. such as

at Park Hill, Sheffield and Hertzberger's Student housing in Amsterdam are well-used and liked. (See Design Bulletin 25, Department of the Environment, Great Britain, etc.) However, even here the concept of communal living and children has only been marginally thought through. Denys Lasdun's tower blocks at Bethnal Green London made an interesting attempt to break down a highrise building into smaller vertical clusters centred around the elevator and stairshafts, he created platforms on every floor of the separate stair and elevator shaft on which there is a small open terrace, a drying yard and rooms for hobbies and pets. This platform is shared by 8 apartments. The units do look onto the open access decks, but not onto the platforms, which is unfortunate.

It seems that what is needed is a variety of groupings for alternative family situations ranging from very private and secluded arrangements to more communal clusters, which might share livingrooms and kitchens, or common rooms and small patios.

"Are there any other difficulties that your neighbors have here in Westgate?"

Other than people not knowing anyone when they come here, not knowing how to meet people, feeling lonely, people not talking in the lobbies, it seeming very cold and unfriendly, no!"

Westgate

"Even if there were light in the corridor, we could use the corridor more. Why didn't he pull the corridor out lengthwise, back it up on the traffic circle, and make a protected internal space for us?"

Eastgate

"The first thing I would like to say is that the elevator shafts and the way the apartments are arranged means that there is just a series of blank doors. You really have no idea if there are people there or not. It's not like you have a window to look out from and you can see if people are out there or not.

Do you see your neighbors in the elevator and getting out on the same floor? Do you just pass each other?

Yes, there is no one I am connected to on this floor. The mothers I have met, have been in the playground, and we've started the relationship there, through the children, and the playground. Then from there on we go to each other's apartments, and that's it." Eastgate

"Everyone is insulated in their own apartment and do not look onto a common space here. In her street, you see people in their homes, you wave, people know you, you feel you belong." Eastgate

As can be seen from these quotes, many women seem to feel that the way that the apartments are organised around the access ways has a great deal to do with their neighboring patterns. These observations confirm the importance of Festinger and Kurt Back's earlier findings in the work, "Social Pressures in Informal Groups." This research work was in fact, carried out in the old Westgate low rise apartments, which were on the site of the present Westgate tower complex which I have been studying. The low rise in the new complex are still found to be more sociable for the reasons given below.

"Is your feeling that the people in the low rise know each other more than in the high rise?

I think that's true. In a way, I don't know why. Perhaps it's because it is a smaller community than here. Here, it is very impersonal. The structure of the building is completely impersonal, whereas there, it is a little better.

Is it because they have the shared entranceways? And they can see out from their living rooms and kitchens?

Yes, well there are 6 families per entrance and it can thus be a little closer there. It's not so big there as it is here, not so impersonal." Westgate

"Oh, we see each other. When I walk past their window in the low rise, we wave to each other. Everybody sort of knows everybody else in the low rise and we wave at each other. My girlfriend for instance lives next door to an inactive mother in the low rise and told me about her." Westgate

"In the elevator, people don't talk to each other. It's a little odd, maybe everyone has a lot of tension. If we shared the entranceway with more people it might help. I believe that the MIT low-rise housing at Westgate, they have a communal entry way which is very nice, and I believe there is more contact there and also in the playground, right there." Peabody

"Where did you meet them?"

Well, there's a little store down in the entrance and I have met people there. I think that being pregnant helped, since I talked to other women who were pregnant. And then after my baby was born, I talked to other women with babies and people would speak to me in the elevator and also waiting in the entrance for mail to be put in the mailbox. When I was pregnant, there were 2 girls who were pregnant, and I talked to them.

Where and when?

When there was a firealarm once, and we all went to stand in front of the building waiting to get back in, and once in the store.

Did you start a friendship, or just talking?

We started chatting and then I felt comfortable about talking to them other times, and got to know them that way. I saw them again in the playground, once I started taking my son out for walks.

Besides the physical groupings of units the organisation of various kinds of group events (such as the firealarm inadvertently was) activities and co-operative arrangements such as floor parties, babysitting pools, play groups, meal exchanges,

book and magazine exchanges, food co-ops, clothing and furniture pools, women's professional groups, social groups and craft groups could all greatly help communications and friendships in the buildings.

"We met Chris and Beth when they had a party to which they invited everyone on the floor. We visited formally at first and then the proximity was a great advantage in establishing informal friendships. The apartment insulates you even more. On this floor we know everyone, but haven't struck up a relationship with everyone, since they are different. Chris and Beth, slowly over the years, we became friendly. The new people--we constantly said to them...the one was pregnant and we said, come over and talk if you need advice, but they haven't." Eastgate

"Do you know the people on this floor?"

Yes, I think I met them though at the Tech Wives, not here, I am sure I didn't meet the people just because they live on my floor. I found, although I don't know what it is, that there are very few people that just go and knock on doors and be sociable and meet that way.

Do you think that is a serious problem at Westgate?

Yes!" Westgate

"There is almost no communication inside the buildings here. There are the Harvard Dames, rather boring, but that's it. Nothing particularly for Peabody residents. They could have some casual things, I think--I felt the lack of communication a lot, maybe a group program, discussion groups, a monthly meeting to talk about things. Most people feel temporary and won't invest much time in other people and some are also really busy studying. We need an easy way to get together. Before we had Adele, we didn't know anyone at all; through her, we met many people in the playroom, playground and playgroup. If you don't have a kid, it's terrible to live here. Once you have children there is more access to meet people, especially in the summer, in the playground." Peabody

"Do you know the neighbors?

The people who are best friends in the building, strangely enough, are people my husband knows from the lab, it just so happens that one lives on this floor. I know 2 people out of the 8 apartments on this floor, that I feel I can go to and knock on the door and say hi and I have lived here for 2 years." Eastgate

It seems as if when an activity has been organised for women, many have responded and there is a real need for this.

"Someone, maybe it was Tech Wives, organized a stained-glass window class in the function room and there was a large turnout of about 30 or 40 people. There are also sometimes lectures in the function room, there was one on child psychology, which I unfortunately could not make. I went to the stained glass class. It was just one meeting though.

Why couldn't it be on a regular basis?

If they even had once a month someone come and show their skill, it would be fun." Westgate

Not only are classes or demonstrations needed, but also there is a strong need for small, local friendship groups in the buildings. I have been trying to encourage those people who have already found such groups to pass on the information to others. Beyond a certain size, a group becomes less intimate and manageable, excludes possible new members from joining and becomes known as a clique. But, at least the information could be passed on about how to do it, and what you can get out of it.

"I have been going to a group at Tech Wives called Today's Women, but it hasn't satisfied what I thought it would. I thought it would be a group who would get to know each other and discuss different topics each time and it hasn't worked that way. Each time, it was a new group of people. Last week, there were some people from Eastgate who said they had got a group of their own going there, they formed it by talking to their friends and I don't know if they meet in their apartments or where.

Neighborhood

The immediate neighborhood of the site is very important for mothers and children to go for walks and see a variety of people and activities. The worst location is Eastgate which is in an industrial/commercial area with heavily trafficked streets and no people actually living there, except for those in MIT housing. It is a noisy, very polluted, dangerous and ugly area for a pedestrian, let alone a pedestrian pushing a baby in a stroller. The Westgate apartments are surrounded on two sides by factories and warehouses, which lead into a low income neighborhood and on the third and fourth sides by the Memorial Drive freeway running alongside the Charles River and the MIT playing fields. The closeness of the river and the green of the MIT playing fields are really appreciated. Mothers don't really feel safe walking in the adjacent neighborhood streets, many of which are in any case, torn up and difficult to walk down (once you get into them through the factory area). Peabody Terrace is in a low and moderate income, low-rise residential neighborhood. It is pleasant to walk around the streets, which have other pleasant Harvard residences and wood-frame double and triple decker houses with porches onto the streets and people of different ages and types visible. There are also some small neighborhood and speciality stores dotted around the surrounding blocks and Massachusetts Avenue with its many and various kinds of stores is not too far away. Westgate, on the other hand, has to rely on the MIT Coop and



Neighborhood

A huge MIT parking lot abutts on one side, factories and the Memorial Drive freeway on the others.

Westgate



Eastgate tower stands adjacent to Kendall Square traffic circle—office buildings and factories are all around.

Eastgate



On 3 sides of Peabody are low-rise neighbourhood streets with pleasant wood-frame houses and small neighbourhood and specialty stores.

the Star Supermarket, the only 2 stores in walking distance; and Eastgate relies on the few stores in Kendall Square. The one disadvantage of the Peabody location is the understandable antagonism of neighborhood teenagers to Peabody residents. They create a security problem in the buildings and have been known to follow mothers up in the elevators and down the corridors, hang around the lobbies, sleep under staircases, break windows, etc. The Peabody residents, however, have not really made an effort to contribute anything to the neighborhood in terms of providing anything for these kids, who are obviously frustrated and bored. The common conflicts of a rich university in a low-income neighborhood are so well-known, that it is surprising that both Harvard and the Peabody residents have not attempted to do anything positive about this problem, except to complain.

"So, now let's get to the things that you dislike about living here. Let's say, what's the most important thing--or let me ask you first, just generally, what do you dislike about it?

Well, just like the area, for instance. OK, we're accessible to the subway, but that's like purely coincidental and we're very grateful for it. I went walking today to Lechmeres, the department store; it's just industrial areas all around. If I want to take him out for a walk, the only place we can go is up and down the river, and you know you can go up and down the river just so many times! There's nowhere to walk at all; I mean even walking to Central Square is such a shitty walk, it's really not pleasant at all!

And you feel really isolated from things?

Yes, very, very much. There are a few shops here...on the corner here, there's a bank, and a drugstore, but the people there are so unfriendly...and that's it. And so there's really nothing around...to just go out for a few minutes for a walk or just to get the kids out." Eastgate

"So, there is no neighborhood around here that you could really be a part of?"

No, and if you go up the back road towards Central Square, it's a very low income, depressed area, and it's so depressed, it's really depressing to walk through. Within our span of walking distance, or visual distance, it's all very tacky around here. Our views are of old factories. We are very lucky that the fuel shortage turned off that Cains Mayonnaise sign, because until then, we had red, yellow and blue blinking all night into our apartment." Westgate

"What about the environment around Peabody Terrace? Outside? The neighborhood? That is open to dispute! Is there anything you like about it?"

Well, the river is nice. I like looking across the river, the bridges and it's all picturesque, and also Storrow Drive and Memorial Drive. Then there's the rest of the neighborhood. I can see part of the view from here and also from the bedroom. The buildings are built in such a way that most people can see the river, I don't know how they managed to do it. But when you go up to the roof you can't see the other buildings, you can only see the river." Peabody

"OK. Let's go back to the question of why you like living here; the most important thing is really the accessibility to MIT?"

Yes.

And is there anything you like about the apartment?"

Nothing, nothing!

And anything about the block?"

No! Definitely not!

And anything about the area?"

No, Kendall Square! You know, maybe if we were looking on the river at least I could say we've got a good view." Eastgate

"So, what do you do with her when you want to go out?"

I take her with me, I enjoy having her around and also, I have to give her stimulation, and since she has already learned basically all there is to know around here, I take her with me and have learnt to adjust to that. We walk to the Coop, grocery stores, and sometimes drive to museums.

Do you go for walks around the neighborhood?"

We do sometimes, but it's very stagnant and dirty. There are 2 walks that are basically worth while; you can walk up to Central Square which is an hour with a child up Mass. Ave. Behind Mass. Ave. is very dirty. The second walk is down to the

Coop and the third, my favorite, is through the fence and right across the field to the Coop. There is also a walk along the Charles, but with all those cars, I am afraid for the child. The immediate environment around here is god-awful." Westgate

Communal Outdoor Spaces--Designing for Mothers and Children

These spaces are necessary as are the indoor communal spaces, for (amongst other things) the purpose of mothers meeting other mothers and children playing with other children. Also important, seems to be the necessity of places for mothers to relax outdoors without children, at certain times and also places where children can have their own small, more private, personal outdoor spaces. The latter, if outdoors, must be in close visual proximity to mothers, but very slightly removed in distance.

All these spaces must, at minimum, be sheltered from the wind, sunny in winter and shady in summer. The areas for children must be childproof, protected from traffic, especially. Areas which do not have fences around them cannot be used safely by mothers with small children, because they have to be constantly on the alert that the children do not run into the streets.

The areas that serve both children and mothers must have alternative and comfortable places to sit. For pregnant women, comfortable seating is particularly important. In point of fact, for anyone who is going to be sitting in an area frequently for a number of hours at a time, the seating arrangements should be carefully considered by the designer. For the children, a variety of fixed and moveable equipment catering to different age groups, is essential.

The problems that mothers so frequently mention of either



Westgate

In winter the children in the lowrise play in the entrance way shared by 6 families. They are fortunate in having a space at all, although it is cluttered with large carriages, tricycles, etc. The lack of creative equipment and organized play activities causes many conflicts between bored children."





Eastgate



isolation or conflict between themselves and between the children, must be understood in order to design satisfactory spaces for them. What seems to happen, is that in Eastgate, where the spaces provided are very inadequate, the lack of contact between mothers and children is so much greater than in Westgate and Peabody Terrace. The one green area provided in Eastgate does not have a fence around it, is unprotected from the wind, looks onto Kendall Square traffic circle, and is extremely noisy. I have never observed it being used, but asked a mother to pose there with children for a photograph, to give some sense of its lack of enclosure, scale and poor location. The Eastgate playground contains one bench, so that if a small percentage of the 60-odd mothers in the building wanted to use it at the same time, there would be a real problem. It is also a very unattractive playground, surrounded on 3 sides by a huge parking lot and does not have a single tree or any signs of plant life. In addition, it is used everyday by the MIT nursery school, which is located on the 2nd floor of the Eastgate building, and these children really occupy the space most days, not leaving much room for the Eastgate children.

If Eastgate mothers want to sit outside in a green space, they have to walk to the MIT Great Court on the Charles River, and they are very grateful that it is there for them to use. This space, however, does not have any equipment in it for children, so mothers have to spend their time constantly entertaining their children there. I have sometimes observed mothers with small children huddled closely together on the tiny



Eastgate

This patch of grass although the only one at Eastgate is not used by mothers because it does not have a (I posed the group in the picture). It is also extremely noisy from Kendall Square traffic and very windy, as can be seen by the trees.

6/20



there's a tiny little garden that I discovered, that's quite nice. There's a little hedge on the one side and a tree there and it's quite quiet there. When Zasha was little, I took a book there and just lay there and read.

Is it windy round the bottom of this building?

Terrible, this building just catches the wind. Jesus, sometimes the windows are rattling and...when we try to get out of the building, I mean you've gotta fight your way out; all of a sudden you get a little bit away from the tower and there's no wind." Eastgate

Westgate has an interesting central court area, which contains play equipment and places to sit in. The central part as can be seen on the plan is sunken to a level about 6 feet below the rest of the open space; the change of level being made by sloping grassy banks, very good for sunbathing and sitting on.

The whole open space is partially divided by the equipment placed there into a number of activity areas; the swing and sandpit area, the child's "house" area, the slide area and the grassy banks area. The latter have asphalted paths coming down them which are heavily used for running up and down and riding tricycles. The upper level has a large grassy area onto which the MIT nursery school opens, a paved and planted area with benches, and two grassed areas with a couple of large trees.

Small clusters of mothers form around these activity areas and consolidate themselves into little cliques which are difficult to join, once they have been established.

I have observed on a number of occasions that there will be at the same time, a little clique clustered around the



Westgate Communal Open Space

"When I walk past windows in the low rise we wave to each other."

"...one of the things I do like is that because of the way the buildings are set, you have to actually sort of trip across your neighbour. And the playground is sort of a godsend in one sense, for the mothers to meet at least."



Westgate

Besides the central play area there is no other place to be safely with children. This mother who wanted to be alone found herself on a traffic island watching the kids closely, all the time.



This huge grassed area between the Westgate complex and Memorial Drive is un-fenced, making it unsafe for children who can run to the freeway.



When the fence was put around the Westgate playground very usable corners were left out - there could be subareas for children or places for individual gardens.

swings; another one on the grassy banks; a third under one of the shade trees, and at the same time, very lonely-looking mothers sitting on the very rigidly placed benches, on the upper and lower levels of the space. Mothers have made the following observations to me about this central space. Firstly, it was only a year ago that a group of them managed to persuade the MIT Housing Office to enclose the whole area with a low fence to make it safe for the children. It was only when two small 3-year-olds were found crossing the Memorial Drive Freeway that the Housing Office was finally convinced that the fence was an essential expenditure. They had previously insisted that they could not afford this big expenditure and also suggested another reason: a fence is "unaesthetic". The Fence Issue is, I think, a reflection of the lack of consciousness of designers and administrators of the needs and problems of childrearing.

A second interesting observation by mothers is that this space, while on the one hand being a good place to see other people, both from the apartment windows and face-to-face if you walk around it, is also an arena of conflict and loneliness. The reasons given are that:

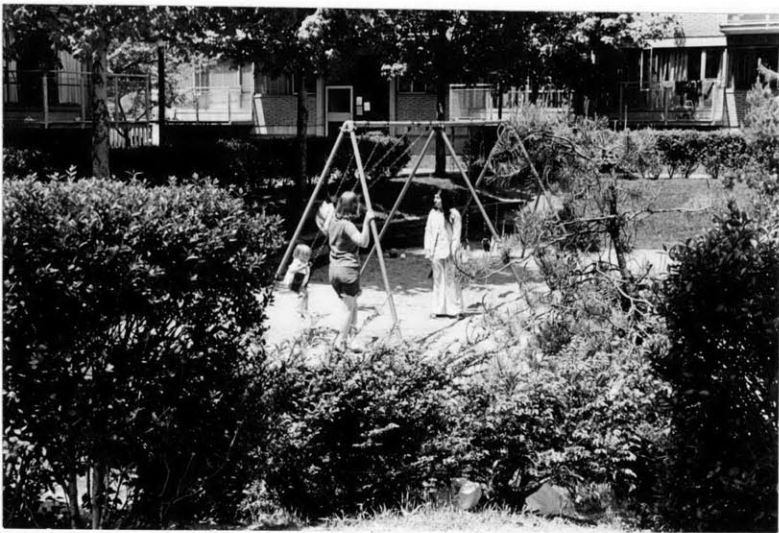
1. It is the only place there is to go with children in this area, and that if you don't want to see all the other mothers or do not belong to a particular clique, you feel intimidated and excluded.
2. Mothers in the low-rise send their children out alone into the space unattended, whereas mothers in the high



Westgate Open Space.
 "So what happens is that people only sit a very short time on the benches (because they are really uncomfortable). Usually everyone uses a blanket and sits on the grass or leans against a tree."



"More of a circular pattern allows people to feel more enclosed and nobody feels sort of outcast."



"They sit in groups? (the mothers) Yes, a group on the grass or on the benches while the children are on the swings. It helps if you have a child old enough to play in the sandbox, it helps to join that group."



Westgate Communal Open Space

"People go into cliques which are really hard to infiltrate, and you end up sitting on your own unless someone comes over to talk to you. I had a hard time..."



Westgate



unenclosed patch of grass between the sidewalk and the Eastgate entrance, because it catches the sun and is not as windy as the grassed area on the other side. If this little patch were fenced in, and some seats placed there, it would improve the situation a little. One usable space would be better than none at all, but there would, of course, still be the problems of conflict between children of different ages, as is the case in the large central Westgate area to be analyzed.

"Even the playground is awful; at least if there were a bit of grass it would help. Actually, the grass on the side of the building here is quite pleasant, but it's so noisy, so bloody noisy, that you can sit there for 2 seconds until your brains blow out; and it also gets so windy there, that you can't even make use of the little garden they provide. The architect could have done something with it, like facing the back of the building onto the street protecting the play spaces a bit. I mean the kids can't use the play ground either sometimes, it's so windy. It also looks most uninviting; it's just a dead space again; I mean all you need is a few kids and they enjoy themselves in any area, but the space is hardly enticing to anyone.

Do the mothers go down there at all?

Sometimes the mothers meet there. They've got a pool and the kids love that. But in terms of laying out the building and the play area there, I think it's ridiculous, it's really not sheltered. The kids can't run into cars and things like that; it's got a stupid little fence around it. There are no shaded, no little pretty areas, it's just not pretty." Eastgate

"Is there anywhere here where you sit outside?

Well, not in winter; in the summer we used to go to the MIT Great Court and sit there and Zasha loved it there. And we tried going outside downstairs to sit; I did it for a while. It depends which part of the day you go because you know I can't stand the traffic noise; on the weekend it's not so bad, but during the week, during rush hour traffic, or generally the whole day, during the week, it's terrible. But generally at the back of the library, the Sloan School,

rise have to come down there with the children. The result is, that when the frequent fights break out between the children, or a child needs adult attention and starts to cry, it is the mothers who live in the highrise who have to deal with the conflicts when they arise. This causes frustration and friction between the mothers.

3. A third reason given for the conflicts, is that there is not enough creative, moveable play equipment there, especially for the 3-year olds and older children. The children revel in playing with any found objects, such as the milk cartons left every week for a day or so by the milkman. Mothers told me that whenever they brought found objects, such as tires or boxes to the space, the janitors would remove them on the instructions of the Housing Office. I asked the Housing Office why this was done, and they said that if the mothers would come to them and let them know what was junk and what was not, they would leave the useful items. A group of interested mothers should get together and do this if they want to reduce their children's boredom.
4. A fourth reason for the exclusion of people from cliques is that these cliques often form in the warmer August and September days, and that latecomers arriving in cooler October, when there are not as many days to use the space, do not have the same oppor-



Westgate

"Children don't get a chance to do creative things. I think it's useless to keep cleaning up the playground and leaving it so sterile."

"The playground is a static place...lacking in things to build with and move around."

"In the summer these hedges are so full you can't see your toddler."

"They (the children) can look through the windows and they can see the other children playing..."

"The kitchen's nice because there's the grass and the trees."



"The kids do use the red milk cartons which lie there until the milk guy takes them!"

tunity to meet everybody outside. There is no orientation or welcoming party for newcomers to Westgate. Every older resident could take it upon themselves to welcome and introduce one new mother, or there could be a series of women's informal parties in the function room or picnics in the playground, to help people to get to know one another and form new groups. Very often the established groups do not want to enlarge themselves and include more members, because they feel the size of about 6-9 people is nicely intimate, and above that, it would become too large. Therefore, instead of trying to join established groups, people can form their own if they have an example (how to do it), and the right places to meet other women.

The asphalted pathway around the sunken playground area is a good space, very well used by small children riding tricycles, and mothers wheeling carriages. It provides a good opportunity to walk around the whole space, see who is there, wave to friends in the low rise and bump into other people doing the same thing. This kind of walkway around activity areas, works very well. The flat areas and grassy slopes are excellent for sunbathing and picnicking out, but everyone sits on the grass under the trees, rather than on the benches, because they are so uncomfortable. They are either placed in impersonal straight lines or single benches facing a blank space

so that there is nothing to watch while sitting on them. Frequently mentioned, are circular soft spaces, sitting around in soft circles around a picnic area, as being more appropriate.

Talking of benches, Peabody Terrace also has some really uncomfortable concrete seats without backs, placed around a round concrete table in an area which never gets any sun and is uncomfortable on those days when it is pleasant to have shade.

To return to the issue of conflicts, another conflict is that created by the MIT nursery school located in the Westgate building. When these children are playing outside, they become mixed up with the resident children and their teachers find themselves trying to amuse and control a very large group. The nursery school very definitely needs its own separately enclosed area and perhaps the large grass area which it opens onto could be fenced off for those children. The Peabody nursery has its own enclosed outside area.

With so many children in such a small space, it is difficult for any child to feel that it can build anything itself one day, and come back the next to find it still there. Even while building, it is free for anyone to come over and knock things down. Mothers mentioned the need for more than one sandpit--a very popular play area--to cater to this need to build your own thing.

When the fence was put in, as can be seen in the illustration, the potentially useful corners of the site were left

out of the enclosure. These spaces still could be included by adding additional fences going to the site periphery, making three subareas for children. If this cannot be done, perhaps these spaces could be divided into individual garden areas for residents, in which their children too could plant their own plants, if they wished. At the moment, there is a long waiting list for the few lots located between the parking lot and an adjacent street, about 200 yards away from the building. Apparently, the children really enjoy watching things grow, but they would have to be accompanied into an area which was separated off, so that the plants would not be run over by children playing.

Talking of plants, there is inadequate thought given to seasonal changes in the planting that is provided. There are no evergreen plants in the Westgate space. In winter it is really barren. In all three places the climate was not taken into account seriously enough as a design factor.

There is one other important factor to mention in relation to the open space areas and concern for both mothers and children and this is the factor of safety. When metal swings are placed in an area where there are small toddlers walking around a mother has to be constantly running after the child to keep it from being hurt by the swings. Canvas swings are a much safer idea or if metal swings are used they should be in an enclosed area. Any unsafe equipment, such as the dangerous slide in Westgate, causes extra work and anxiety for a mother. This slide does not have a proper end to break a child's fall.

It ends abruptly with the result that children bang their heads as they fall off it. It also has very low sides so that small children can fall out as they slide down. Every item should be selected with great care in a playspace. Enough has been written about their design already, except for me to emphasize the importance of safety and the need for enough interesting and varied equipment for the benefit of whoever is taking care of the children, as well as the children.

Following are the mothers' own words about the above ideas, and others concerning the open spaces in Westgate.

Form of Open Space and Social Life

"What do you like about Westgate? Environmentally or socially?"

Well, one of the things I do like, is that because of the way the buildings are set, you have to actually sort of trip across your neighbour. And the playground is sort of a god-send in one sense, for the mothers to meet, at least. For the children, it's really not, but for the mothers it is. We are able to get together there and talk. Before, when I lived on Beacon Hill, there was no one that we became friendly with, for a whole year, except for one girl. When mothers take their children outside, it is to the playground, and they are then confronted with the other children and the other mothers. They are immediately put into the situation where they have to meet and cooperate with one another.

So, is that where you tend to meet other people, or have you met the other people you know elsewhere?

That's where I have. I really haven't met any mothers otherwise." Westgate

"Is that because you didn't have any face-to-face contact with the other people, easily, and every day?"

Yes, that's it. I mean, there were just the outer stairs and the apartments in the building. All the buildings are right next to one another, but nobody has a place where they can get together, unless they live there for a long time, or

aggressively open and show that they want to make friends. But this environment pushes you into having to cooperate with one another, in the sense that the three low rise buildings and the high rise are all around the centre point of the playground.

You don't have to walk through the playground to go out of Westgate, but you do tend to go there a lot." Westgate

"If it's a good day, do you go down to the playground?

I don't go down there too often. He really is too small to play there. When he was smaller I would take him in the carriage and I would take a book and while he had his nap, I would leave him in the carriage, and just sit out there and read and sometimes we would see friends. We don't do that very often now.

Why?

Well, the kids don't like to just sit in their strollers, well, they like to crawl. It's still a little cold for them to crawl around there. There are people who do that now but I don't know them and it feels sort of like I was intruding if I came and sat down with them; unless I knew at least one of them.

They sit in groups?

Yes, a group on the grass, or on the benches while the children are on the swings. It helps if you have a child old enough to play in the sandbox, it helps to join that group. I think it all has to do with your children and how old they are and also where you live. Probably in the low rise they know who lives in their building, and go out together." Westgate

Conflicts

"What bothers you in the playground?

Well, we were here all summer and in the playground a lot of the time. There are quite a lot of kids that are playing there unsupervised. There's Pat with Christopher, and I go out with Aaron and there are a few people that you can count on that will be out with their own kids, but the rest won't be. Because they live in the low rise, they just send the child out, but the child feels very rejected, sometimes, pushed out of the apartment. As a result, there is a lot of aggression that happens in the playground--a lot of fighting among the same age group. A lot of teasing. And what happens is that because you are the mother that is out there, you get the brunt of it, and you are the one that is always dealing with the conflicts that happen. And then, you sometimes have to deal with mothers who aren't too happy with your dealing with the conflicts. It's like a vicious circle. But yet, if they are never out there, you don't want your kid absolutely clobbered, or teased and not having any enjoyable time, so I took him away." Westgate

"Do you find that this central area helps at all in getting to find out who lives here?

It depends on when you come here. When we came in October, there were tons of new people, because it was warm, for about the first week. But the thing that happens is that because you are protecting yourself, people go into cliques, which are really hard to infiltrate, and you end up just sitting on your own, unless someone comes over to talk to you. I had a hard time. Leslie, my friend, too. She would go up to someone and start talking and pretty soon the circle would be complete. It's very subtle, no one really is conscious of it, it sort of happens that you are excluded and it takes a while to get in somewhere. When I first came, I thought everyone was very unfriendly and I was very depressed, because I came here specifically to meet people and I didn't meet them. And then it was winter and you never saw them, so by December I was really upset and depressed because the only place you can see people is in the laundryroom, once winter comes, because only very few mothers come out of the apartments into the playground. In summer, it's amazing; you don't know where all these kids come from or where they were all winter--they just sort of stay inside the apartments all the time. So, I went away to work for a year, so I didn't have to deal with it till last spring. And then I became pregnant and left work. I had met only 1 or maybe 2 people after 1½ years! And then, I know everyone now after the summer being out there, with everyone else. No one wants to stay in their apartment all summer, so you are out there a lot. Everyone has lunch out there--about 9 am they start filtering out and they don't go in till they absolutely have to. So that's how I met everybody out there, in the summer." Westgate

Size and Articulation of Space

"You mentioned that the playground is a good place for mothers, but not for children? Is that because of the different age groups getting into conflict or in what sense did you mean?

I think the main problem is that for the amount of children, the playground is too small. The other thing is that the playground is a static place. It's not really a playground. If you don't mind my saying, the architect who built this building is a lousy architect, or else he had a very small amount of money and materials and he was not able to express himself at all. And the playground is thus laid out for an adult's size, not for a child. There is actually no small and personal area for a child to go to and create himself outside.

Do you mean that it is lacking in subareas for the different age groups and different types of child activities?

Yes.

And also things to build with and things to move around? More creative equipment that you could move and build with, more creative equipment?

Right. Everything is stable and fixed here and children need things that move. That slide for instance, mostly is not used by children. Occasionally, the older children will jump on it. We thought the nicest thing to do with it would be to take those hexagonal plastic shapes to pieces and let the kids roll them about in circles in the playground."

Restrictions on Play Equipment

"Constantly, the custodians cut down their things, inner-type tubes, anything that is creative to a kid, will immediately be displaced. The leaves are immediately raked up, there is no soil. They are just not allowed anything. It would be great if the paper cartons were allowed to stay in there. They play with them for a few days, and they suddenly disappear.

So, really it might be a problem with the management, rather than the architect; the fact that you can't bring things in there and manipulate the space?

Well, if you look down there, logically, you can see where it has not really been designed for children. Only last year, they put that fence in. They put it in however, in a boring square, not allowing the children access to the potential corner space on that side or this side. Whereas, if they had taken the fence out farther, they would have found they could have gone to the corners of the site. Each age group of children, or different types of children, could have had their own corners or areas that they could choose to do what they liked in. If you look down, you will see it is very convenient for adults. You have your path up to the door and your path all round the playground. But, when you look at it for children, it's lacking immensely."

"I mentioned before not being able to put up any kinds of tires or any sort of logs or things in the playground. There are certain areas kids like to dig in, but they say grass should be grown there and the kids are kicked out. Usually in the spring, they bring in more sand for the sandboxes and that's neat and the kids really like that. There aren't areas that you can really grow things in, I mean the kids. The kids also like to climb trees, but there aren't any climbable trees and we do have a lot of 4-5 year olds who love to climb. There is one climbing tree only. So, what they do do, is climb on top of those houses and jump from one to the other. That stick out

there--that's supposed to be for climbing--the kids aren't impressed, the angles aren't good for climbing."

"The noise is awful, they mow it every day, and then they take all the grass away although the kids love to play in it. Again, it goes along with that sterile, clean, atmosphere. I would like things kids could move around--utilize to build with; they are yearning for that so much. What they did 2 weeks ago was they went out front and took the steel rods which had been placed to show the sidewalk in the playground. There is an exhaust at the bottom of the building and they stuck the rods in there; they are yearning to build; they took all the bricks out from under the trees and were building with those. The cleaners just undo them, and then all the 5-year olds are frantic. They come here on garbage day, when they burn all the garbage in the incinerator room and they just wait to pick up boxes, bottles, jars and use them to build.

Have you tried to put things there?

Yes, little things like the tires, but they took it away, because it was wearing the grass--even though the kids loved it. The kids do use the red milk cartons which lie there until the milk guy takes them. Everyone is out there, knitting, embroidering in the summer, which is lovely. If only there were more things for the kids to do!"

Do you see that little boy playing out there digging up dirt by himself? Watch as soon as the custodian comes by, he will have him stop, go away, and the custodian will put all the dirt back. There are 5 or 6 custodians who clean up all the time. In the autumn, when there were all the gorgeous leaves, the children just went crazy raking them up and jumping up and down in the leaves. I went up to the custodians and asked if he could please leave the leaves for the children. He said, "I can't, they won't let me." The children's moment of pleasure did not last too long!

Could the mothers perhaps get together and speak to the management?

Well, I spoke to a mother one day about fixing up the space for the children and she found out that we would have to pay for it all ourselves, and the future residents would benefit for nothing. Since we are all on a shoestring, we cannot afford it. She did not pursue it further. She has 2 more years here and is very interested to do something about it. She also said that any additions would have to be approved by the management and therefore be of a very high standard and expensive. I haven't gone out like a ball of fire on it because I am only here for 1 academic year and only realized the problem after being here for 4 months. And since I only had about 4

months left, I selfishly did not feel up to fighting for it. If I had realized as soon as I came, I would have probably been up to doing something. A year after all, for a child is a very long time. I was very angry after a few months. I felt trapped and angry with the outside environment. It is the first time I have ever been in such a close-knit community."

Good and Bad Play Equipment

"Do you use the brick-paved area?

Yes, that's the last place to lose the sun, in the end of the afternoon everyone sits there. That area in that corner where the pine trees are is protected from the wind and is warm. Everyone sunbathes in their bikinis on the grass and they put out wading pools: there are lots of faucets to hook up to. Those who don't mind nudity go at one end, those who prefer kids with clothes at another end. The kids love the ramps for running up and down. The most used one, is the one by the stairs --it's steep and they really love it, because you can get momentum and they go down and zoom past. They even go down the stairs with their bikes wheels. When it snows, they really love the hills they slide down. In the summer, those hedges are quite full and tall and you can't see your toddler running around the hedge and you go crazy to find him. That's annoying."

"Are there any pieces of equipment here that are good?

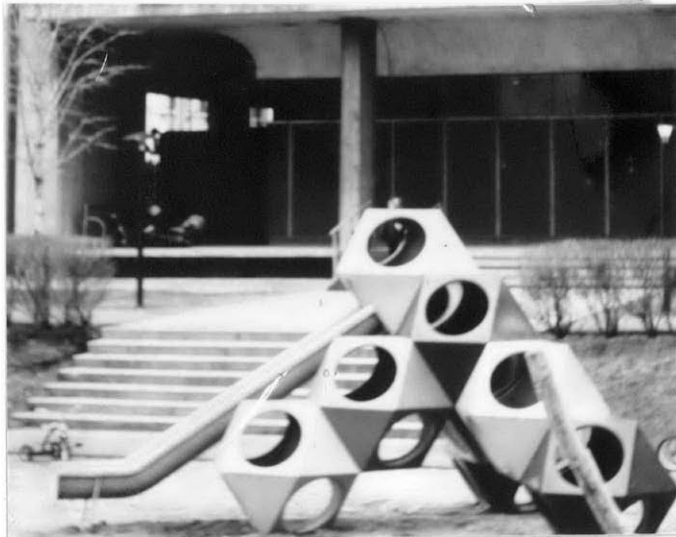
I think the sandpit is about the only thing. The little houses are alright for the children, but they are also very boring very soon. If there were something inside them, or they were a little higher up, so there were more of a view, they could be better.

Do they go in there often?

Well, mine goes in there only once in a while with 2 or 3 other little girls, but only for about 15 minutes, and then they get bored. I think the type of swing they have here is dangerous and many children have been hurt by them. They are made of metal and when they fly through the air, the little ones sometimes get hit on the head or the mouth. There are also a few canvas swings, which are much better and safer. That climbing thing is also dangerous. It should just be a jungle jim or a squared thing that kids could swing on. That climbing thing is only for climbing on to the top. The older kids swing down and jump down, but for the younger ones the angle of that curve does not allow them to swing, because it is an awkward angle, which hurts your arms. So, if they do manage to climb to the top, they get scared, cry, and have to be taken down. Coming down on her own, my daughter gets her chin caught and hurt, and it is dangerous. A single square climbing thing would be better. That slide over there which does not



"That slide does not have a flat piece at the end to break a child's speed as he slides down and is very dangerous...they tend to fall back and crack their heads on the bottom sharp edge."



Westgate Play Equipment

This hexagonal piece of equipment is not very much used.

"We thought the nicest thing to do with it would be to take those hexagonal plastic shapes to pieces and let the kids roll them about in circles in the playground."

have a flat piece at the end to break a child's speed as he slides down, is very dangerous. Then they reach the bottom and slide off onto the ground, they tend to fall back and crack their heads on the bottom sharp edge of the metal slides. It should have a better designed end."

Benches

"They have benches with no backs--you have to have either something in front of you or something to lean on if you want to read, seems to me.

Another thing that is difficult, is the way they have put the benches, they are very impersonally placed. They could have been placed better, in a more circular fashion, rather than a straight line."

"Yes, more of a circular pattern allows people to feel more relaxed and enclosed and nobody feels a sort of, outcast. Sometimes, where there are a lot of mothers out in the sun, some mothers have to take that one bench on its own over there--facing away. And they feel rejected, over there. You can see it--it's an environment of rejection."

"In the play area, you mentioned the problem of the benches?

Yes, since you do spend a great deal of time there, they are very uncomfortable. The back of the bench hits you just at the wrong section and you usually get to be very uncomfortable after a short time. So, what happens is that people only sit a very short time on the benches; usually everyone uses a blanket and sits on the grass and reads or leans against a tree."

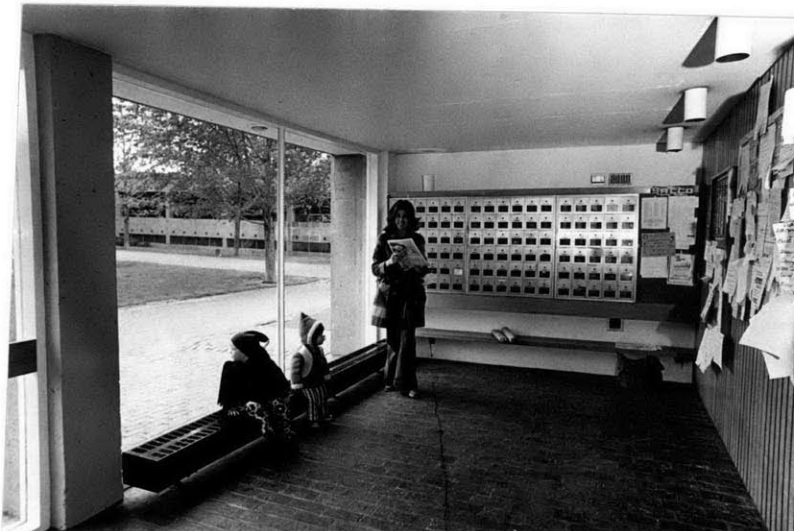
Entrance Lobby

This is a place where you can see a lot of people coming and going in and out of the building and therefore an important potential meeting place for mothers. Some mothers come down to the entrance in Westgate and wait there for an hour before the mailman comes in anticipation of seeing and talking to friends. I have observed the pregnant women and mothers with infants do this especially, since they are even less mobile than the majority; it is often too cold for them to go outside with the infant. The entrance should be light, warm and welcoming and have comfortable seats to sit on as well as in interesting view out. The noticeboards in the entrance are another way of "hanging around" waiting to see other people. I have observed mothers coming down to the lobby, looking to see if there is anyone there they could strike up a conversation with, go away, come back half an hour later to look again. The dark, uncomfortable Eastgate entrance is very much disliked and the warm light, airy Peabody one with its light wood paneling, red brick floors and view out onto the grass courtyard is appreciated. Unfortunately, the benches in this lobby were so comfortable that resentful neighborhood teenagers would hang around there, sleep on them and frighten the women and children; and they were removed. This problem of vandalism by neighborhood children in Peabody could possibly be resolved by taking more account of their needs and frustrations by some of the "snooty Harvard types who refuse to have anything to do with the neighborhood they are living in..."



Lobby

This is a bright, warm, airy lobby with an attractive view out onto a green courtyard. The red brick floor, connecting inside and out, light wood panelling and large glass windows all contribute to the pleasant aesthetic quality.



Peabody



Lobby
This is a dark, not very welcoming space with nowhere to sit down.



Eastgate



Lobbies are Potential Casual Meeting Places.

When the mailman comes around noon, some mothers with young children have already been waiting there for one hour. This is a good excuse to see a - quaintances. The mothers with tiny infants or pregnant women are the ones I observed most especially in winter when it was too cold for them to be outside.



Westgate Lobby

"What about at the mailbox in the entry? Do you ever meet anyone there?"

I do. But I don't join in that activity. There are some mothers who sit there about an hour before the mail comes, they get together and have chats. They are sort of not my league. The other league are in the playground. You see, there are different groups here, with different women in them.

Oh, I see. That's interesting, there is another group who meet in the lobby, by the mailbox?

Yes, and they are the younger ones with the very young babies who meet there.

Really, that's interesting. Don't you see them in the playground at all?

Rarely. A lot of it is probably because of the cold."
Westgate

"The entrance space is not welcoming or warm or a place conducive to standing around, even though you do meet people as you wait hours for the elevator, and there is the notice board to look at."
Eastgate

It is really important to have a playroom in a building where there are a number of young children; especially for cooler days and in the wintertime. In addition to the playroom, there should be play areas for small children close to the apartments where the parent does not have to be right there all the time with the child, necessarily. There is a lack of such semi-private play spaces in all the buildings. On floors where there are all families with children, the corridors could serve this function, because noise is more tolerated, but this possibility is reduced by the fact that the small children could walk into the elevators unescorted and become lost, the fact that in double-loaded corridors the children cannot see out and also the fact that they cannot see their friends in their apartments or be seen by them. The playrooms in Peabody and Eastgate are also inadequate, although appreciated for being there at all (Westgate does not yet have a playroom at all). The playrooms should be attractive, colourful and pleasant spaces for both parents and children. There should be comfortable places for mothers to sit in but not only in a straight line against the wall, as is the case in both Eastgate and Peabody. Views out, growing things and natural light are all appreciated as well as access to an enclosed outdoor area. The internal area should be large enough to have subareas for children of different ages and interests. These areas need not be defined by physical barriers but by the activities and equipment that are placed there. Much has been written already about play equip-



Playrooms

Eastgate

This room is a square space with a carpet and a few plastic toys supposedly to cater for about 70 children! The adjacent small roof terrace is supposedly for use of all residents and no children's things are there at all.



The seating arrangement usually consists of benches lined up against a wall. At least here there is a view outside.

Peabody



The large column in the centre of the space obstructs parents' vision. This room is large and spacious with more equipment than Eastgate but still very unimaginative.

Peabody

ment so I will not repeat this kind of information except to say that since so much of both parents' and children's time is spent in this space, it should be given a much more consideration and a higher priority by programmers and designers. Also, the residents should be made more conscious themselves in their orientation to the building as well as in the resident manual, about things they could do themselves to improve and equip their playroom. Some parents need to be educated about the importance of the physical environment for their children, as well as themselves. The architect can make sure of the following design features: a soft floor surface that "gives" when children fall onto it; a pleasant view outside; places for plants to grow; walls that can be used as surfaces to stick children's drawings on; built-in low and high storage areas; wet areas; toilet facilities close by; a large enough area for a variety of activities and age groups (most architects do not seem to take into account the differences between 1-year olds and 3-year olds) and access to an enclosed outdoor area for use by the children and parents, where a sandpit, small slide and climbing thing can be installed.

A reason given repeatedly for the little use made of the Eastgate playroom is that when there are a few children in it of different ages, there tends to be a lot of conflict between them, since the space is too small and inadequately equipped. The parents could make alternate times for children of different ages to overcome this difficulty, but it would be preferable if it were always usable by anyone who wanted to use it.

"What about the playroom--what do you feel about the way it looks and feels?"

That could be improved too. But that is part of the whole concept of how playrooms could be arranged in a way that is inviting to a child. That playroom is just a big square room that they have added furniture to. And I am sure they could have done something, say, having lofts for the children, or just even some type of division for the children. It's nice that you can see your kids wherever they are--except for the one column in the center of the room, which you have to look around, I would rather not have that, but you can see the children at all other times. It's just rather an uninteresting space, just the shelves on one side, the sink on the other, and they have thrown furniture in-between.

Should there be divisions for different ages?

No, but there are no real activity areas; for instance, you have a certain type of toy in a certain area so that 18-month olds would be attracted to that area; you could have your soft toys and your stuffed toys in one area and your puzzles and things on tables which would attract other kids there. This way you break it up with activities, rather than barriers."
Peabody

"I'd rather see a bigger room with more alternatives, if it were possible. In that size room, maybe that's the best arrangement, but if it were 4 times that size you could have many alternatives for you and the child. More room to work with. Say, instead of having that courtyard (the brick one) out there, they could have extended the playroom outwards to have more space to play--that would make more sense to me.

So you would rather take space from the big court and use it for something else?

Yes, I would rather.

If you could add space to the whole complex, you would add a general purpose space and add space to the playroom...why couldn't the playroom be even 3 stories high--extended it out, and say, have an area upstairs with different activities than downstairs?" Peabody

"What about seating for the mothers?"

It's one of those things where everyone is lined up against the wall again. It's very difficult to try to talk in a line. You would almost rather be in a circle and it's difficult, because there is no place to get into a circle, without turning your back on a child or being in the middle of the play area.

Since you do have that one line thing, I guess you don't really have cliques forming because everyone has to sit against that one wall, and look straight out." Peabody

"If the playroom weren't occupied by older children, you would spend more time there?"

If it were equipped more adequately. It only has toys that parents left there when they left the building. They are broken and not of good quality--there was only 1 decent toy--a wooden slide which the older children broke, so now, there is no equipment at all, worth anything. Also in the winter time it was cold up there. If it were a well-equipped place with a variety of things for them to do then surely I would go... climbing things and things for which there is not space in the apartment she would enjoy. But, at the moment, there is nothing new there. Here she can have music and other things to play with. So, I don't take her up. Music would be nice up there. There is a facility in the lounge--why couldn't they just pipe it into the playroom which is adjacent? It is so close and the children love that. And Sesame Street. Half the time we have to bring the children back when it's time for that. They would really like a TV up there, but it might get broken probably. It would have to be fixed high up. I was so disappointed when that 1 slide was broken. She's just getting to the drawing and painting stage now, but I would keep her here, so I could clean up the mess, since there is no place else up there. There is a nursery school for 2½ year olds for 1 or 2 days a week, I think. Next fall, she will go for more structured play. That will be convenient." Eastgate

"The playroom up there I used to use quite frequently, until Erin joined the playgroup. Too many large or older children come into the playroom now, so we use the apartment instead for the playgroup, so the small children don't get pushed around as much. It's hard to restrict that room to one group, but they should make specific hours for specific groups--maybe the kids over 5 should have another place, because they break all the younger kids' toys. There are not many older kids, but they are pretty rambunctious, active and need to be outside and there is no place for them there. They can't play in the lounge either, because of the rules made by the lounge committee which always has a majority of people without children on it, because they are the majority in this building." Eastgate

"The playroom also could be so much improved; it really is an ugly room for children to spend the whole morning in; the curtains are broken and falling apart. I am one of the chairwomen there, and I am trying to do things. Last year it was so dirty that I didn't want to pick up filthy toys from the floor to give to Adele to play with. This year we asked the janitor to clean more often and he does now. All those toys there are in bad shape and broken. Harvard doesn't provide any toys, we have to buy them ourselves. There are only a few chairs there;

no rugs or anything else; it could be so much nicer. The other chairwomen of the playroom went to the manager to ask for a carpet, etc., but they won't do anything. It's our room, he said, so we do what we want. And people here don't want to pay for it; they bring down leftover toys. We do collect a dollar a year to buy toys once a year. I suggested that everyone pays more money, but they don't want to pay more; and it's funny, because they spend so much time there. One mother said, "Children dont' really care how curtains look!" Peabody

Laundry

Laundries in all three buildings were not adequately considered in the design process. They are "utilitarian" spaces in the narrowest sense and do not take into account the fact that mothers come there with small children. There is nowhere comfortable to sit, or safe, pleasant space for a child to play, in view of the washers and dryers. All three places have lounges adjacent but not visually connected to the washer-dryer area. The sharp edges of the machines, hard, dirty floor surfaces and sterile finishes are extremely disliked. The Westgate laundry is in the basement, has no natural light or ventilation and is an ugly, dirty, dank smelling space, adjacent to the "executive function room". The Peabody laundry is on the top floor but has no outlook or natural light. There used to be a lounge area adjacent to the utility area, but not visually connected to it. Since it did not seem to be used, it was divided and converted into a study area which has small windows and a tiny, dark sitting area with a door onto a roof terrace. The latter is rarely used. There is also a change in level between the utility area and the lounge area in the laundry which is hazardous for crawling children and clumsy toddlers. The Eastgate laundry is the best of the three, but still very inadequate. It is located on the top floor, has large windows and a couple of chairs to sit on, but still no real space for children, especially crawlers. It opens by means of sliding glass doors onto the roof terrace so that people without children can sunbathe there in good weather.



Laundry
There is nowhere for a child to play in view of the machines.

Peabody



"There are sharp edges and they grow plastic flowers there."

Eastgate



This laundry is extremely dirty, has no natural light, view out or ventilation and not a single chair.

"What about the laundry room? Do you use the one in the building?"

Yes, it's not very nice, compared to the one downstairs which is spacious and pleasant...the one up here is sort of a long, narrow type of arrangement and then off of it, is a study area and they have put cubicles in there to study. And there is a toilet facility. I am not pleased with this laundry. There is a long counter to fold things on which is nice, but I think it was sort of just stuck up there--the laundry does not look as if it was designed especially--long, narrow and badly designed.

Can you see out from there?

No, there is an access door to the roof. The laundry is almost the worst thing here, it's really bad.

What do you do when you do the laundry?

Well, my husband does it now, and he goes into the study area, so it's more convenient for him to do it." Peabody

"They did not have a study room at first when I was here. Once they built the study room, Bob started doing the laundry because he'd study up there while he was doing it. I haven't used it for a long time; I did at first though when we first moved in." Peabody

"The laundry space up on the roof, what do you think of that space as a place to be?"

I used to find it really hard to be there with young children. I used to put one on my back while I did the laundry.

Because there's nowhere for them to play?

It didn't seem like it. If I used to take toys, it seemed as if disasterous things always happened.

Where did you put the toys when you took them?

I'd just take little things I could push, a little giraffe they could ride.

Between the washers?

I guess the main problem was the fact that there was a difference in floor heights. That used to be a real hazard for a tiny child. Surprisingly, that was the main thing. It was kind of nice that they have a nice big place to fold clothes, a place to sit, and the roof is right there; I found it generally to be fairly nice." Peabody

"Zasha can't crawl around--there are sharp edges and they grow plastic flowers there." Eastgate

"And what about the laundry room?"

If it had a sitting space there--a large space where the children could play, while you were doing your laundry--that would be terrific. At the moment, it's not safe. If you go up there with your child, you feel guilty about leaving the child alone in the playroom for even a few minutes, because it is not connected to the laundryroom directly. It should be closer. This way there is no place for children--they are in the way." Eastgate

"The laundry room is conveniently placed but usually crowded. It is extremely hot in summer, but the main thing is the need for more space. I just put the laundry in and come right back to the apartment. That's not a place you can stay in, generally, especially with a child. There's nowhere to sit comfortably." Peabody

Lounge

The lounges in all three buildings seem to have been designed as more formal gathering places, rather than informal common rooms. The worst one, the Westgate lounge, which is in the basement, has no natural light or outlook and has been furnished to look like an executive conference room. Hardly a comfortable and inviting place for mothers to go to during the day or evening. The leatherette couches are stiffly lined up against the dark wood-panelled walls and besides one or two square tables, there is nothing in the dark room which apparently was originally a storage area and was converted to a lounge. The Eastgate lounge is very bright and sunny and located on the top floor of the building with a magnificent view of the river and the city. The lounge is very large though; about seventy foot long by fifteen foot wide and the only definition of small spaces within it are four groups of fairly comfortable chairs and couches. There are flowerboxes in the large windows (with plastic flowers growing in them), built-in storage closets on the end walls, a piano and a kitchen adjacent. This room is hardly used in the daytime at all, or in fact in the evenings, except for large weekend parties or functions. The "lounge committee", a group of volunteer residents tries to ensure that the room is looked after and discourages children from using it, ("they have their own space; the play room.") At one stage, there was a ping-pong table set up in a part of the room, this was broken by extensive hard use and

is to be replaced. There was a suggestion at the Eastgate Tenants Committee meeting that the lounge could be subdivided into activity areas for different groups during the day with low, free standing screens which would have to be folded up whenever somebody wanted to have a party. Although the space is underutilized in the day by mothers, who could conceivably use it to have coffee, exercise groups, crafts, etc., they could not safely leave their personal things there. Part of the lounge could be made into an activity/common room, reducing the dimensions from 70 odd feet to about 50 feet. The mothers could be encouraged to decorate and care for this space, plant real, live flowers in the window boxes, have meetings and classes there etc. The first thing they need to do, is for a few of them to organize themselves, get together and have their own lobby at the Tenants meetings, and on the Lounge Committee. The Peabody Terrace lounge is on the ground floor with large windows looking onto the brick court on the one side and a defined paved courtyard opening off the other side. People walking in the brick court can see into the lounge, unlike the Eastgate or Westgate locations. In addition, adjacent to the lounge are a kitchen, ping pong room, and a seminar room. The lounge seems to be used more frequently on week nights for classes and meetings than in the other two buildings as well as on weekend days for drug groups etc., but it is also hardly used at all during the daytime. The Peabody mothers, however, did not complain as much as the Eastgate and especially Westgate

mothers about places and spaces to go to during the day to see other people. They do after all, have the large playroom in which there are usually people sitting and talking. Another factor, is that the Harvard apparently meets at least once a week in the lounge and this is an activity to which mothers can go to. The Tech Wives meet in the Student Centre on campus; not in the residential buildings and this is another reason for fewer activities in the lounges in Eastgate and Westgate.

In the cold weather, which is a very large and long part of the academic year and of this part of the world in general, it is really essential for the programmers and designers to think of where mothers and children can go in the wintertime, close to their apartment. Many mothers feel a close connection between the isolation of winter and the lack of adequate communal indoor spaces. What is needed are comfortable, welcoming places that the residents can do things to themselves to make them personal. These places need to be located adjacent to paths that residents cross frequently, so that they can easily see in and drop in, casually. The Westgate lounge in the basement is in the poorest location and the Peabody lounge, the best. Perhaps, smaller common rooms, shared by a half dozen or so families, would be more suitable for some families. If a range of shared communal situations could be provided, this would better serve the range of user needs. This concept is developed further in the section on programming and user needs.



Eastgate

The lounge is sunny and has a good view - but is restricted for children, and crafts. Usually empty during the day.



Westgate

It looks like an executive conference room - no natural light or view out dark materials.

"The lounge is nice to sit in for a change, when the weather is bad I go to the lounge for the sun, since we don't get sun in our apartment. It is nice and big for Zasha to crawl around, but I can't really put equipment there, it's against the rules. It has a lovely view of Boston." Eastgate

"Is there a function room for parties, etc.?"

Yes, there is the common room. I happen to be Catholic and they have Mass over there every Sunday. Groups can use it for parties. They also have a piano in there. There is a ping pong room and 2 cinema rooms, one of which is going to be changed into a study since there is not enough study space here.

Is the function room a good space?

Well, again, someone is thinking of putting plants in it; there are no pictures on the walls; again, you have a big square room and that's it.

Can you do things to it? Are you allowed to?

Well, you can do as much to it as you can to these apartments. If you want to hang something from the ceiling, you can't put a screw into the cement. You are not allowed to put anything on the walls that won't stick with tape; and it's the same there. When there are parties, they string up paper and so on. The manager is now getting plants and pictures, he said, to try and improve it." Peabody

"Have you ever used the function room?"

Yes, a girlfriend and I gave a shower when Barbara had a baby. I have gone down there a couple of times just to sit on my own.

Oh, you do? In winter, or when?

No, before that, when I was trying to adjust to the environment, I was having a very difficult time coping with it. And I would go down there on my own and leave her with my husband, lock myself in the quiet of the function room. I am the kind of person who likes to sit and fume and think a lot and I am used to going out for a long walk in the evening after dinner, and here I feel terrified to go out at night. I have been out once down Vassar Street and at night in the eerie fog, it's not too pleasant.

You are restricted to this immediate environment?

Yes, my husband has used the function room once or 2 times for meetings. Most mothers have birthday parties there, that's about all." Westgate

"There is no common space for winter here?"

Well, there is the function room, but nobody uses that.

Why couldn't you have your exercise class there?

There has been some talk of that. One of my neighbors is

assistant teacher in Maggie's classes and she started talking about doing a class here. It would make it a lot easier for most of us.

It seems to me that the function room could be better utilized than at present?

Yes, to go down there and do things and see other people would be really nice." Westgate

"Strange, because it's a winter climate a lot of the time and I would imagine that if there were some other space where you could do things, other things like maybe hobbies, paint furniture, do exercises, other things like that, it might be nice?

Yes, it would be lovely." Peabody

"In winter, you go when it's snowing or you go into the playroom. I was just trying to find out whether that is adequate in terms of places to go, when it's cold?

I get the feeling that the fact that we're always just sick of winter is probably that we just don't like the cold weather in general, but I suppose more than that is that we don't have as many places to go and things to do." Peabody

"We had a hard time this winter. We had never been in a situation before where we were pent up in a very confined environment, where there was no privacy, either for us or her. We found ourselves buying a new toy each week to keep her occupied, fingerpaints and water colors and a record player, and it went on and on, this materialism." Westgate

"Since we suffered I am very aware of this problem. Being in the apartment all day restricts her play and in the winter time it is really bad. She loves to go outside. If the weather is nice we stay out from 2 to 5. We go around and wait for father and she plays in that court I mentioned. In the wintertime she stays inside here in the apartment all day."

Westgate

"Do you feel there's a lack of places to go in winter?

Yes, it's great to have at least the playroom. The more I think of it, the more I'm really glad we have the playroom, rather than thinking I wish we had other places. I suppose it would be nice to have other places too, but it's not common to have a lot of things to do in the winter." Peabody

"There isn't really a winter common space?

No, no, not at all! So, if you come to live here in the winter, it's very hard. If you come in the summer, it's difficult, but not as hard. If you can at least meet 1 person, you can then meet everyone she knows, then you filter out, that way. Everyone is standoffish at first. People don't want to get into deep relationships either, because you know you are going to say goodbye. In the beginning, you just talk about the weather and the kids. We talked about the reservation that we all have, because everyone is going to leave amongst ourselves, this summer. When the Brazilians on the other hand, or any nationality or group has a birthday, they always have a huge party--every single Brazilian at MIT goes--a big thing--an all day thing and everyone brings food.

Are other non-Brazilians invited or excluded?

No, it depends on the people. Some only associate with Brazilians, some with Americans too. There are a lot of Brazilians here and Israelis, and they all know each other. It's very interesting in the summer--you might approach a group, and they're all speaking Spanish or other languages. Last summer, we the Americans, were the outsiders. If you are in a foreign group--they start speaking their language and you are out, and can't understand or enter. This causes cliques too."

Westgate

"There's a problem of a real lack of space for us mothers. They tried to economise as much as possible in this building and there's a lot of irrationality in it. Like there's that huge lounge, which is hardly ever used, maybe once or twice there are people reading there. I take Zasha there... to play in the playroom... There is also a lounge committee or tenants association that makes the rules that are completely against some of the tenants' interest. There are often a majority of people without children on the committee. You can volunteer to get onto the lounge committee, but who wants to get onto the lounge committee to make rules? The difference at Westgate, I imagine, is that because of the size of the open space, kids of different ages can find spaces for themselves. Here it's impossible!

Have mothers ever got together to do something about the lounge?

They did at one stage when Ellen was here, and there was also a big problem when MIT gave Eastgate tenants some money to do with as they liked. There was a huge argument because the people with children wanted something for the children...there is just so much for children that you want here. I mean in the playroom...upstairs and in the bloody play yard downstairs. And those people without children said, well what are we going to get out of it? So there was a big fight and what happened in the end was that we got a ping pong table which is now broken and no one using it. It became a fight between a jungle jim and a ping pong table." Eastgate

"What did you do this winter?"

We had a hard time! We went outside; we made ourselves, even if it was freezing and we stayed at least 15 or 20 minutes 2 to 3 times a day for exercise. There were only another 2 or 3 mothers who did this; the rest I did not see for 2 to 3 months, at all. Once in a while, when the new snow would fall, they would take the children out to slide down the slopes, and that was it. We did a lot of finger painting and she did a lot of swimming in the bathtub. There was nowhere else to go, and since we were used to a pretty warm environment, it was very hard, but we went out and walked every day.

Do you think if there was a place, an inside winter space for mothers, you would use it? There is that function room in the basement?

Yes, it's not designed for children though, at all. It looks like a conference room, not an activity space and if anything, that is what we need, an activity room.

If that were converted, I wonder whether it would not be used for, say, exercise classes by you?

Oh, yes it could, I am sure.

And I wondered if there were any possible group activities where people could casually meet in the winter time? They could perhaps have a coffee maker there. It seems rather strange to me that in a climate of so much winter, winter space is not thought of more for mothers?

I never thought of that for the function room but that suggestion would be really good, especially for those mothers who just don't go out at all, but would like to visit and have some activity for the child." Westgate

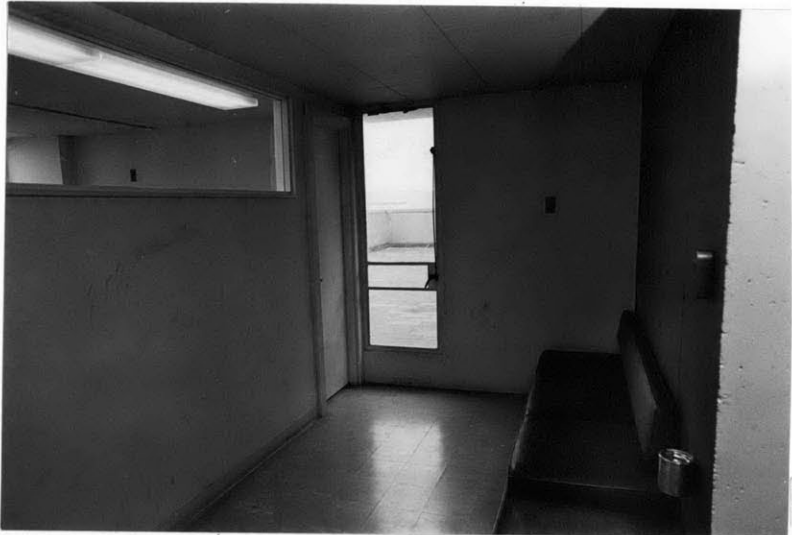
"If it were a more pleasant space, that is with more freedom and equipment, would you use it more? If it were a big room that you could do with what you like, a room with surfaces to do things on, would mothers use it more?

We have 2 tables and lots of chairs and we can use the room with the permission of the person who holds the keys, as long as we clean it up and leave it the way it was before we went in there. But, if we want to do arts and crafts, for instance, which an awful lot of mothers do do here, you can't do it down there, because nobody has time to stop in the middle of a project, clean up and drag all the stuff upstairs and then down again. If it were laid out with lots of tables instead of just 2, then the mothers could have lots of their own space, children could play in the middle of the room, the mothers could do sewing, chatting, painting and would go in for that, very much, the function room set up like that. There would still be room for the meetings and exercise classes and things like that." Westgate

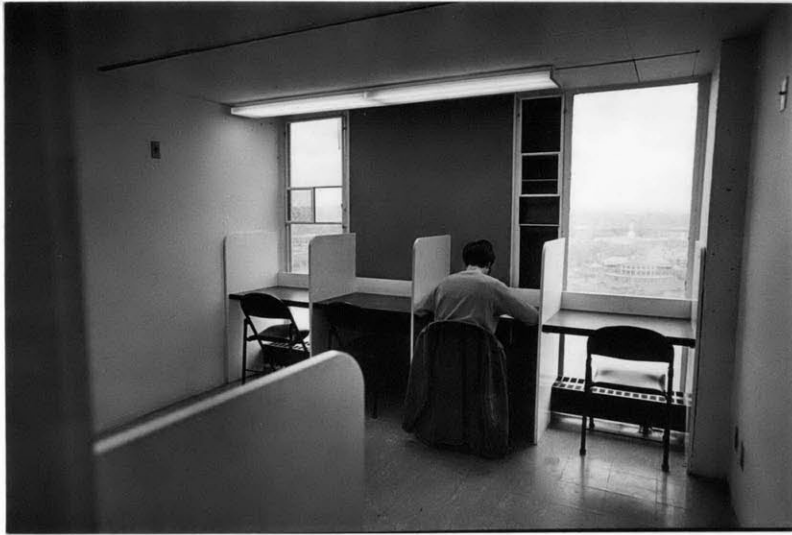
Roof Terraces

Eastgate has 2 small, enclosed all-concrete terraces, one opening off the laundryroom and playroom and the other off the corridor on the top floor. The latter is crowded with hibachis, is very dirty and is used only for barbequing, not for sitting out. The other terrace has a hard, brick floor surface and cannot really be used by mothers with small children because it is not suitable for "crawlers" and no climbing equipment can be put there because of the dangerous hard surface. In addition, if it were adapted for children, mothers with children would conflict with the rest of the residents who use it for sunbathing. The terrace is in fact, too small for the needs of all the residents if mothers and children are included.

Peabody Terrace has 5 or 6 large roof terraces which are located on the roofs of the lower rise buildings as they step up to the high rise. The terraces have wooden decks and are reasonably childproof, although there have been some complaints of splinters and mention of the danger of children climbing up the low wire fence and falling over. I have observed the Peabody terraces being used by residents for repairing furniture and repotting plants as well as much sunbathing in warmer weather. The advantage of the terraces is that they are rather more private, communal open spaces and provide other options of places to go with or without a child. Westgate has no roof terraces at all, but the playground-court area is more private than most of the Peabody or Eastgate open spaces and is used extensively



Peabody Terrace



Eastgate

for sunbathing.

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"It leads onto the open terrace area which just has an open roof; the terrace is like solitary confinement; you have these huge walls, concrete floor and the sky. I would rather be indoors! When he was much younger, I tried taking him up there in his carriage and sitting and reading, but it was miserable there, so I came back inside. When it's warm, people do sunbathe. There is another cookout place which we have never used, although there are hibachis there. It's not a place to stay, just put on your meat and leave. There is nothing there-- it's tiny, concrete, and closed in completely." Eastgate

Most mothers mentioned the lack of a utility space in the building where residents could do the following tasks easily; (tasks which tend to get done in the backyard or carport of a single family or low rise situation) painting , fixing and making furniture and toys, cleaning carpets and dust mops, and repotting and spraying plants. In addition, most families have hobbies for which there is no space in a tiny apartment. What is needed is a kind of utility/workshop/hobby space with individual lockers for residents, water supply and sink, washable floors and walls, and good ventilation. I have observed people using the roof terraces, the corridors and as much as they can fit on their balconies in warmer weather. Apparently in Peabody, there is a small space for this purpose in the basement. None of these solutions are adequate, however, and such a space should really be part of the building program.

"I mean I'd love to have another place I could paint my kitchen chairs in besides my bedroom, but I would attribute that more to the fact that our family is just growing out of the apartment. But that's the kind of thing that is difficult to do here in the apartment. There is one place down in the basement that we use for building furniture sometimes, it's a kind of workshop, but we tend to build things that are then too big to get into the apartment. We've had some problems; we've done some things down there.

I guess it's not a place where you can congregate with other people to do hobbies?

No, it's too small, you can just do your own project there. It would be really nice, of course, to have a big, nice workshop with some equipment and stuff-" Peabody

"What about space for the children to go and paint or mess, doing their stuff?"

No, there is none. That could be there too. I could see that if that space were used frequently for something else, they would object. But if it's just a blank space, why not use it? Especially in a place like Peabody, where students tend to use many hand-me-downs and need to do a lot of repairs or even to shampoo a rug. They passed out a thing saying, please don't do it on the floors, it will stain the linoleum, but there is no other place to go and do it. You don't have a place to go and shake out a dust mop--a lot of things like that." Peabody

"It would be nice also to have a space in the building where you could do pasting and glueing and painting and fixing-up. They thought about doing a place in the basement like that, but I don't know if they ever did. The kind of thing, for instance, that if your plants have a disease and it says "spray in a ventilated area" and you don't have a balcony. It would be nice to have a place where you could paint and do things, so you don't have to worry about cleaning up your particular balcony or apartment. A handy space that was well-lighted, that you could go down to without having to go down in the basement. If you have something to refinish you have a lot of things to carry and you have trouble moving it back and forth. An all-purpose room is what we need. In fact, I would almost like to see that space across from the elevator used as an all-purpose room, so you could go in and do things, as opposed to just having that empty space." Peabody

"There is no corner where I can just go and do it (paint). I have to move everything out of the way and then clean up afterwards. I like to paint a little...go away...come back and do a little more. My husband also has hobbies that are messy, which he can't do here in Eastgate at all.

Is there any space in the building which you would call wasted space which you could utilize--maybe just in fantasy--like could there be an area in the building where you could paint?

We need a place, for example, to sand the crib, fix furniture, etc. This whole building has an upper class orientation. Upstairs, there is this function room and when you walk into this beautiful room, you know you can't mess up anything, because of the expensive furniture. You couldn't paint up there, for instance.

You could sew up there?

Yes, but my husband repotted some plants in the kitchen one weekend and there really was a mess in the kitchen." Eastgate

Everyone complains about the corridors and relates the lack of contact between people living on the same floor to their form and design. The things that are disliked about the corridors are the following: the fact that there are no dwelling thresholds or windows looking onto them so that in fact you can see that there are actually people living there (the way they have been designed makes them public rather than semi-private or communal spaces). There are a number of European apartment buildings which have attempted to overcome this problem by making the corridor a very wide, single-loaded space with enough room for various family activities, windows looking onto them and defined dwelling entrances rather than "blank doors" opening off them (examples of these apartment dwellings are Park Hill, Sheffield, England, Student Hostel by architect Herzberger in Amsterdam, and Acorn Place, Southwark, London). Other factors strongly disliked about the corridors are their drab colours and feeling of anonymity, because every floor looks just the same. People have made their doors look like home by putting up signs, flowers and pictures. Some residents have put up paintings they have created themselves to improve the corridor walls. It seems as if smaller clusters of units around a semi-private space such as the one in the stairwells of the low rise apartments in Westgate, where the children can play in winter unsupervised, are really needed. These cluster access ways must only be accessi-



Hallways in Peabody

The lowrise and highrise are linked at the 4th and 6th floors where there is this widening.

"I don't see why anyone would want to use it..." "I think if you put plants there and made it cosy, people would see it as a sort of place to meet..."

"I have never seen this space used."

It is a transitional space, not a semi-private space for neighbours to share.

ble to a few units, though to work, and the apartments should all be family units. The "street in the air" examples such as Park Hill and Acorn Place are well used by parents and children but even here the dwelling threshold and the problems of designing for community and privacy have not been adequately considered. Windows looking onto the space are non-existent in Park Hill and too large in Acorn Place, creating too little and too much visual contact respectively. The public sidewalks should not come close to windows (could be separated by things such as flower boxes, etc.). Another important design consideration is the frequently mentioned problem of mixing families with children, with families without children on the same floor. The problems that are created, are that the corridors cannot be used as playspaces because of the noise. Quiet areas of the apartment unit should not be adjacent to the corridors if the units have to be mixed. This is a design problem that can be solved if carefully thought out. There should be a choice of unit groupings for different people also, since some people desire more privacy than others. It is a mistake to assume that this is a completely homogeneous group. The corridors in Peabody towers are connected to the low rise corridors on the 4th and 6th floors this is liked because it enables one to go for a walk inside the buildings with the children. Where the towers and low rise connect there is a widening of the corridor, but this space is not used much for children's play because it is in the wrong place. No dwelling



Hallways

The single loaded corridor is more pleasant. There are no windows looking on this hallway or doors opening directly onto it. The colours are dark blue brick and black carpeting.

The carpeting reduces noise of people.



The view out of the hallway is pleasant and connects you to the outside as you move through it.

Peabody



Their lobbies are dark, naked looking and sterile. The floors are light grey linoleum and there are no windows looking onto them or natural light.

Westgate

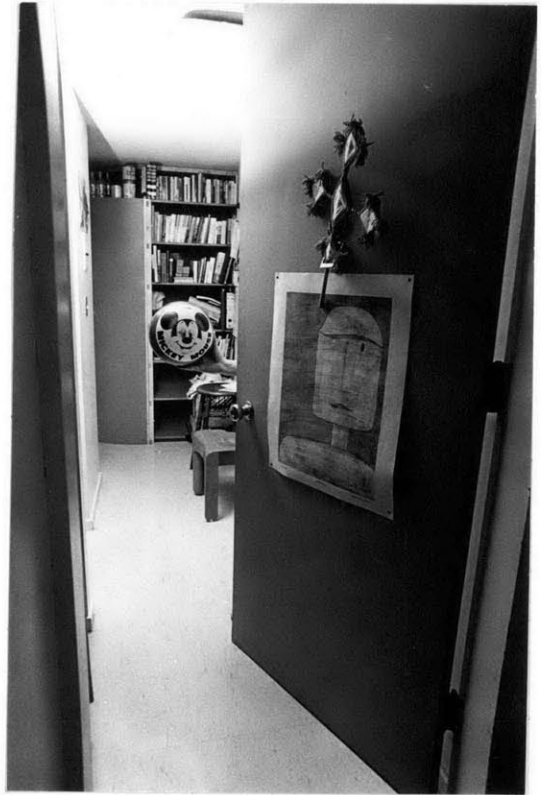
units open onto it and it is a transitional rather than a semi-private space.

"Each floor is the same. The corridor is just a means to get to the elevator. We let Zasha run up and down in the corridor, everyone comes out to see what's going on; it's nice. We sometimes fix up things there too. That's the first time we met the lady with the baby on the floor. We only do that very occasionally, because it's dark and dreary and not conducive to being there. It would be nice maybe if we could look onto the corridor; or if there were a central space with light coming in and we could see people passing. We can hear people but seeing them is a different sort of contact--you know, you can wave and so on. It could be much nicer." Eastgate

"On Ellen's floor they became friendly with Cindy and Pete who set up a big plaything in the corridor which was really nice; people would stop in the elevator and look, other kids would come to play--it was really nice. There's no problem of sound between apartments. In fact, you feel isolated. The only contact you have is through smell and common cockroaches. The Chinese girl I know here now I met on a walk up and down the river and we started to talk there--never talked anywhere in this building--there's just nowhere. She then invited me up to her apartment. We met when I was going somewhere, and she was too. It was funny to meet at the river, when you live on the same floor." Eastgate

"The same thing about the corridors. They are very sort-of naked looking. I was with a few women in the elevators leading a discussion group, and this is what they said too. They said it was a nice looking building, from the outside, but when you come inside, it's just so bare, and it's just not a warm, welcoming-type of environment, at all." Peabody

"The materials in the corridor?
The concrete, and you know, black, inexpensive unprinted carpeting!" Peabody.



"I find that the people at the doors in the hallways are very much on the defensive. They sort of have one foot in the doorway, and as soon as they get inside, the door is locked. Nobody ever comes around to knock on each other's door to ask for help or for interest or anything, or even to say "hi". I don't know anybody on this floor, nobody at all." Westgate

"The other thing is that they shouldn't mix efficiencies with families with children on the same floor which creates conflicts." Westgate

"And this friendship pattern thus does not work on your floor? Do you think it's because the Westgate low rise units have a common entrance space and they have all their toys and things there and the kids play there in winter? Whereas here the corridor is just a corridor and not a common space?

Part of it is that, yes. Also down there, they are all couples with children, so everyone expects it to be noisy. So, the children are allowed to go in the halls, and get together and play. Whereas here, there are now 3 children on this floor of about the same age, but you never see or hear them. My daughter is the only one who goes in the hall on her bicycle and I only allow it before her noon nap, for about 10 minutes and then I have to bring her back in. The rest are married couples without children.

Oh, do you feel you are going to disturb them?

Yes, she does, once in a while. One of the mothers who just moved out asked that she be quiet, because she was banging near her door. So, you are in a situation where you have to restrict your children, whereas there in the low rise you don't. There, it is expected.

So, if all families with kids were grouped on the same floor, it might be easier to get to know them and for the kids to use the corridor as a play space?

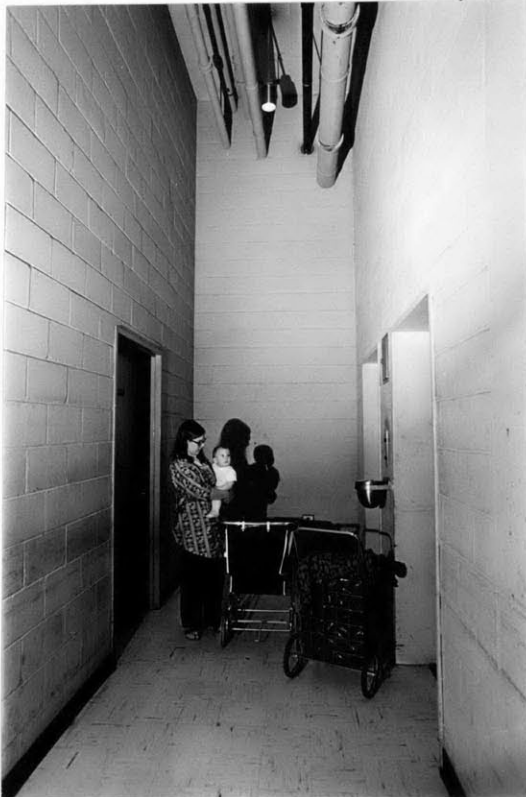
Yes, I think it would be a lot easier." Westgate

"And from the elevators, they have little lounging sort of places, but even those lack a warmth. You can almost understand why the architect did it; it's expensive to put expensive carpeting and comfortable chairs and keep the maintenance up. And ashtrays and the kinds of things that would welcome you to use that area. To my knowledge, I don't see why anyone would want to use it, to sit up there, for instance, and study, say. I don't know what it's meant for: it's just in front of the elevators.



Hallways
Eastgate

"Each floor is the same. We sometimes let Sashe run up and down in the hallway; everyone comes out to see; it's nice...We only do it very occasionally because it's dark and dreary and not conducive. Maybe if we could look out of the apartment into it...see people passing..."



Westgate

This is the hallway in the basement to get to the lounge and laundry room.

Have you ever used it?

Sometimes, Karen wants to see the river and we'll stand up there for 5 minutes and look. But I can't imagine why anyone would want to use it for longer. I have seen some teenage boys smoking there. Why would anyone really want to sit up in an area that's going to be interrupted by people walking in and out of the elevators? There are no plants, there is just nothing about it that would make you want to go to that particular place and sit down.

Could it be fixed up?

I think if you put plants there and made it cosy, so people would see it as a sort of place to meet--a place to discuss something. Say your wife is busy doing something and the kids are playing, like maybe you were here and Gary was studying and we could go and sit there and talk." Peabody

"Mothers don't come there with their children?

No, I have never seen that place used. I have seen a dog--he sometimes lies there. And even he prefers not to use it if he can get into his own apartment. I think they had the space, and said why not put a little thing here--I don't know that it was actually designed. When you say "design", it's as though you mean it was planned to be there--I think that after they designed everything else, that space happened to be there, leftover, and they said, "Ha ha, we'll put a couch there!" Peabody

"On the access galleries, there is this little space next to the elevators. Do you use it?

I use it sometimes, yes. I take the kids there if it's really raining and I don't want them to walk through all the puddles to the playroom. Especially when I have the playgroup. We go out in the hall and run up and down the hall and play "ring around the rosy" in that area, and do somersaults and stuff. It's a different space to get out into and I do use that in the winter sometimes, just for a short break, just to be in a different space for a little while." Peabody

"Why don't you stay there long? Is it because you disturb other people or there's no equipment there?

It feels strange to be there, because people don't normally use it and also because when you go out you do sort of want to see other people. And when people go by there, they don't quite know how to react to the fact that someone is there; and so instead of feeling glad to see another person, you sort of feel, is he going to speak or is he not going to speak?

It's sort of uncomfortable, so I think that's why it's not normally used by people.

Feels like a transitional space?

Yes, because there is never anyone else there when you go there, so it's just another place to be alone with the kids."

Peabody

Kitchens

The small "efficient" kitchens were really disliked because there was not enough room to put a high chair inside to feed a child or for a second person to be working in the kitchen at the same time. Also, kitchens without natural light, ventilation, and views out were really disliked. It was very much appreciated when there was room for a diningroom table in the kitchen, so the whole family could eat there. The fact that there is no room for a dishwasher in the "efficient" kitchen was also very much disliked. Some women went so far as to say there should be fittings and space to hook up a washer and dryer also, to save having to carry laundry to the laundryroom. Both of these women happened to be students as well as mothers and housewives. The large pantry in the Peabody kitchens was greatly appreciated. Because small children tend to open and climb into low closets it is necessary to have high, more inaccessible closets to store items such as detergents and breakable items. The kitchens must also be child-proof in the sense that they must be safe. The metal top of the stoves in some kitchens was dangerous when it was hot since children could touch it easily. The fact that the kitchen fittings, i.e., sink, stove, and refrigerator, are close together in most kitchens was greatly appreciated. Another very important factor was that there should be enough space for children to be in the kitchen while a parent is working there since often children want to be close to the parent.



Undersized kitchens at Westgate and Eastgate without natural light, views, ventilation, enough space for a child to play or be fed, space for a dishwasher or husband to help. Notice the all-metal stove tops, dangerous for children.

"What about the kitchen?

Well, the kitchen is not really a kitchen. If it was a bit bigger, if I could feed Zasha in there, it would be fantastic; but it's just too small for anything. Even in the 2 bedroom apartments, our friends had the same problem. It's just too small for anything. It's as if this building really did not have children in mind when they built it.

You would like to feed Zasha in the kitchen?

Yes, if it were possible, because he and I make such a mess now--that little corner where I feed him now is about the farthest away that I can get from things, but you can see the whole time, he's throwing things on the floor and somehow in the kitchen, it's just easier to keep a hold of it, of food-stuffs and all that." Eastgate

"I think it would be easier with children to have a bigger kitchen, though. You also can't have a dishwasher in these kitchens, which I really hate, and everyone else does, too. Here it doesn't seem, though, to be arranged so much for students as for higher income groups. It doesn't have a bigger kitchen where you would think lower income groups such as students would live, where you need a kitchen to feed a baby and you know that eating is not formal. This is nice if you want to eat formally in a living room setting. It seems sort of strange that it is that way." Eastgate

"What comments do you have about the kitchen?

There is no light there. You really can't see what your food looks like. The cabinet space is not adequate--it's hard to get to reach over the burners to the cabinets. It's very hard to keep clean, because of the incinerator blowing in. Everyday, there is so much dust permanently caked. If you close the vent, you have no air, because the kitchen is this blocked little box and feels so claustrophobic, I wish it were in a more open space! I wouldn't want another one like it! Like your children or husband can't help you in the kitchen, because there is only this little space next to the sink and stove--so you trip over one another. If you want to get a pan you have to move the baby stool away. Oh, it's a real hassle and that's a big minus here. Bill, my husband, really can't get into the kitchen. That's why I want to move into the 2 bedroom also, it has a longer kitchen and you can have your table in there, and stuff to eat on. We used to be able to eat on that table, where I have to change her diapers now. Now we do a lot of buffeting around." Eastgate



A Child's Space
is created by emptying
the low closets out into
the adequately sized
pantry space and high
cabinets.



Peabody

"The stove has got a stainless steel top that gets very hot and with children around it's very hot and they go around touching! You know, the steel comes right down to the front. The actual knobs are out of the kids' reach, but you can't tell a child not to touch the oven, and I know kids here burn themselves often." Eastgate

"The kitchen is also a problem, it is so small and badly arranged, so that I burn myself often trying to reach the counter across the stove. I bash my head against the closet doors if I forget to close them, since there is no room to move, the refrigerator door bangs into the wall when it opens.

What about the shape of the kitchen in terms of work?

It's pretty accessible as a working area to cook and all that. It's pretty good. They've give us a wooden block which is very useful." Westgate

"Is there anything right with the kitchen?

Yes, it's small, and it's convenient and therefore everything is at reach. There is quite a bit of counter space which is handy." Eastgate

"I like having an eating area that is right there, close to the stove. And then they do also have the pantry area, next to the refrigerator, and that makes it very nice indeed." Peabody

"We have the kitchen table in there which is nice." Peabody.

"Also in the kitchen, there is a place to put her high chair and feed her in the kitchen which is convenient because children mess a lot when they eat." Peabody

"We've been living in old apartments, so the kitchen was kind of nice, because it was much more convenient than we'd had before.

And are things closer together?

Yes, things are closer together and there's more counter space, and you know old kitchens tend to just have a sink sitting here, and a stove, and the refrigerator way over



Well-Designed
Kitchens.

Visual connection to
and from livingrooms.



Peabody

Space to feed a child
and for the whole family
to eat. Space for a
dishwasher. A pleasant
view out, natural light
and ventilation.



Peabody

A built-in pantry is lo-
cated behind the refrig-
erator.

there so that you have to walk a lot more and there's no place to prepare food and not enough space to put away everything, unless you have lots of cabinets. Here I could fit everything in and still have some space left over that shocked me, and it was nice." Peabody

"Do they eat in here in the kitchen?

Yes, they eat at the table with us. We had high chairs up until a few months ago, then we just had too many chairs in the kitchen, so then we got rid of the high chairs and we made them both booster chairs. We've had them eating at the table with us since it was at all reasonably possible.

That's nice that they can eat in the kitchen with you. They make a mess, I guess.

Yes, they're terrible, but I'm really relaxed about how our meal times are in here, so it didn't disturb us.

If you'd had eating in the living room, it would probably have been more difficult to feed them?

For a while, we did have the table in the livingroom; we've gone through lots of changes of how we've had things in this apartment. We had it in the livingroom because I tried to make the kitchen a play area for a while. I thought that would be better than having the livingroom a play area--it didn't work out too well.

Why was that?

Well, it got to be a pain to take the dinner into there, and take it out; and then, too, they grew out of that need to be constantly with me; like before, if I was in the kitchen they would be in the kitchen, so I needed to have some place for toys in the kitchen, or else they'd just be doing things to bother me. That's why that shelf is up there; that's where the toys are kept; and I had a big swaddle board on this wall that they could put pieces of felt up on and design some stuff..." Peabody

The large livingrooms in Eastgate and Westgate buildings were very much appreciated. The dimensions of the rooms are about 11x22 and 17x12, respectively. The circulation pattern in the rooms is such that there are 3 walls and 2 corners available for furnishing in Eastgate and Peabody, and 3 corners in Westgate. The 3 corners provide many alternate possibilities for furniture arrangements in Westgate and this is appreciated. The livingrooms in Eastgate and Westgate are large enough to partition off an area for a baby to sleep in or for a study area. The window wall is the long dimension of the room so that this partitioned off area can have natural light. In Peabody Terrace an area can be defined for study or baby, but not partitioned because it will not receive natural light.

"What about the shape and size of the livingroom?

It's not bad. You are very limited though, as to how things can be arranged, because you just have the 2 walls and this wall is shortened by the entrance to the bedroom. All the furniture in just about every apartment is arranged the same way. You don't have too much choice. That window wall is ruined--you have the heating there and the bookcase, so there is not too much you can do with it." Peabody

"Have you seen anyone divide up the living room?

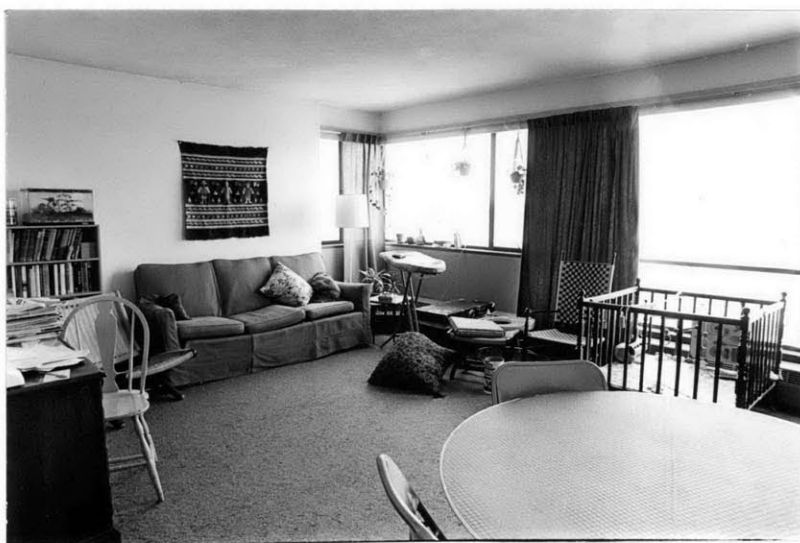
No, I wish they had, since this space is too big for the child to sleep in. If I had the money I would have partitioned it, but you need permission from the supervisor to do it and the standards have to be so high that it is a major investment for students on a shoestring. It has to be a permanent fixture or something that doesn't touch the walls or ceilings." Westgate



Livingroom Light



Eastgate



All 3 buildings have very bright light livingrooms which are really appreciated especially in the winter-time. Note the low part of the window which the infant in the playpen can see out of.

Westgate



Livingroom Partition
Another ingenious free-standing curved space for the child built by the residents.



The child can see out into the livingroom from his space.



Eastgate

"Is there anything you like about the apartment?

I think it really is an exceptionally designed apartment on the inside, having such a big livingroom area. Most apartments that you see, have a sort of little square living room. Luckily, there was enough space for us to build this little partition for the baby." Eastgate



Livingroom
Partitions

Residents making good use of a large living space build a free-standing space for baby.



This partition could easily be sold to future residents or dismantled. Note. Baby is eating in the livingroom and father studying at dining table.

Eastgate

View

The distant city views afforded by living high were really appreciated as were also low views of grass and trees, residential buildings and people. Much disliked were views of traffic, parking lots, billboards and factories or commercial buildings. The view out from the kitchen was mentioned as a problem in places where it did not exist at all, i.e., in Westgate and only through the small kitchen hatch via the livingroom in Eastgate. In Peabody, very much appreciated was the fact that the kitchens had large windows looking onto grass or brick courtyards, or onto the river. One of the most important factors about the view was the fact that the children should be able to see out without having constantly to climb up to see out, with the danger of falling through the glass. The floor to ceiling windows in Peabody and Westgate were much appreciated, because they had the heating element in front of them and they prevented children from pushing on the glass. Mothers were very conscious of the psychological and learning advantages that a view out of the apartment afforded their children (e.g., when a 3 year old can see her friends in the playground, father coming home from school or work, other people and activities). An interesting and important role is making women feel less claustrophobic and trapped in a small space, especially in the winter. In Peabody Terrace the through-views, one side onto the brick court, the other onto a grassed court were much appreciated. Views from the communal open spaces



Views from Peabody Terrace Apartments

"I like being above things versus on the ground—
it adds a different dimension... you can
sort of daydream out into the city."



such as the view of the Charles River from the Peabody grass courts or brick-paved pathways were enjoyed. Peabody was designed so as to afford many openings or views through the site into neighbouring streets and the river. In Eastgate the view from the playground and grassed garden are of Kendall Square trucks, billboards and factories and Westgate courtyard although it does not really have many views out, has some similarly unattractive ones. Views out of most private and communal spaces are thought to be important, including entrance lobbies, laundries, playrooms and corridors.

"The view from here--do you like it?

I prefer the other side that is the River--it's much more aesthetic. At night all you see is the signs of the St. Johnsbury trucks coming in and out and before the energy crisis you had the Cain's Mayonnaise sign popping on and off till 1:30 in the morning. It goes, "Potato Chips/Mayonnaise/Potato Chips/Mayonnaise!!" Now they shut it off. What's really neat is that the bulbs go out, so you only get half a potato chip or half of a mayonnaise going on--it really gets to you. All of this window space--your home radiates pink and then blue, pink and then blue. Not only blinks, but different colours too. When you had company it really got them. You sort of became immune to it, but your company never did." Eastgate

"The view here is not so great, but we lived before on the side overlooking the campus, the city, and the river and I just loved that.

And here, you can see down into the playground?

Yes, but most of our view is into industrial area, or the big truck parking lot.

Do you look down into the playground to see who is there?

Yes, I check to see who is down there before I go down there." Westgate



Views from Westgate (above and Eastgate (left)

"...the Cains Mayonnaise sign popping on and off till 1:30 in the morning. It goes "Potato Chips/ Mayonnaise, Potato Chips/ Mayonnaise...all of this window space radiates pink and blue!"

"I would like to look at something soft and pleasant or interesting."





Windows connect to activity and friends in the playground, without mother having to pick the child up to see who is there.



These windows are unfortunately too high for a child to see out of.
Eastgate



Peabody

Child's View Out

Small children are handicapped by windows designed for big people. When they cannot see out easily, they endanger themselves by climbing onto ledges and leaning against glass or screens. The low windows with the heating element in front are safe and provide both a view of the sky and ground for adults and children.



Westgate

"The view is really pretty from here, especially in the morning when the sun rises and at night when it goes down. I like big windows and even during the summer, it is not that hot, because there is the river breeze which we catch."
Peabody

"I asked you about the view from the different rooms?
The kitchen's nice, because there's the grass and the trees, and I like my view much better, than, say, the 14th floor. I have a girlfriend, by the time you get up that height, she gets unfiltered light and it's not so pleasant as having the trees and some of the filtered light coming into your kitchen, instead of that stark, naked look, that her kitchen seems to have. The children's bedroom is very pleasant from this point, too, because even when the children play there, they can look through the windows and they can see the other children playing in the garden. So that's nice."
Peabody

"What would you like to look out onto?
Water, greenery, people. I mean, I would love to look onto a street, even. Just life, you know. I spend quite a lot of time here where Zasha loves watching all the cars go around the circle. I don't like cars all that much and I would rather look on something else--something soft and pleasant or interesting."
Eastgate

"Well, I just don't feel like looking out, the nice view we have got is the temperature gauge across the river. The river is quite nice, and Beacon Hill, if we sort of shut off this industrial area in front. Actually at night it's not bad. Like our friends on the 23rd floor have a view of the river."
Eastgate

"We moved the dining table, so we could see out when we eat. We look past the industrialized buildings and we can see a bit of the ocean in the distance. In the summer we see all the boats on the river. We don't get super light in the afternoon. One view is pleasant on one side to the river. The other always has lots of trucks and noise. There are also constant planes right overhead all day, but you get used to it. I prefer to be higher up here, I think, because of the view."
Eastgate

"The rest is the Electric Company. It's still kind of nice, because we lived in a basement apartment before, where all you see was motor tires and people's feet. So, I like living in a high rise with the view. We see Kendall Square, though, which is very noisy." Eastgate

"I like being above things versus on the floor level. It adds a different dimension, than being on ground level, you know, looking out.

So you like the view?

Yes, well, you don't get as claustrophobic a feeling--as if you would when you were not in this apartment but on floor level, where all you see is people walking. At least, you can sort of daydream out into the city. I do like the space, the window space a lot!" Westgate

"What do you like about the block or surrounding area?

Well, there really isn't very much, because we are on the factory side of Cambridge. So there really isn't very much to see.

And the whole site, I mean the immediate area?

It's better than Eastgate. Eastgate has all the factories around it. The only nice thing about this, is the trains. Aaron loves to watch the trains go by. Sundays are train's busiest days. And you can see them going back and they disconnect the cars and they then go on another track. That's about the only neat, interesting thing.

For him and you too?

Yes, to just sit and watch the trains.

Do you watch the people down there at all?

Yeah, one thing that tends to happen, is that because of the environment not being very stimulating--the St. Johnsbury trucks and all that stuff--you do watch the playground a lot, and the people. I am forever watching people." Westgate

"Do they look out the windows?

Oh yes, they look out the windows; they watch Daddy coming home, and that sort of thing." Peabody

"The windows...either make the windows lower or make it so it takes account of the kids. You know, if you are shorter than the window space, you've had it and what view anyway do we have to look on?" Eastgate

"She is a very active child, so apartment living is not for her. I was worried about the windows because she climbs up to look out and she has shown such an interest that I am afraid she might fall out. That's another reason for having the air conditioner, you can keep the windows closed all the time. Several times, I found her up on the dining table, leaning against the screen to look out. I spend a lot of time picking her up so that she can see out. She has learned a lot of words from looking out the window: car, snow, etc., and she likes the view at night, before she goes to bed..She can see the planes." Eastgate

"It's very nice that the kids can see out." Peabody

The amount of sunlight or daylight was a very important factor in adding a feeling of spaciousness to a small apartment. This was mentioned in most interviews. Where the living-room external wall was not largely glass, as in one particular kind of apartment in Peabody (there is a bookcase built into the external wall), this was disliked. The light and brightness was also very much appreciated on dull days, when because of the large glass areas, it is not necessary to turn on the lights. When there was not natural light in the kitchens, as is the case in Westgate and Eastgate, this was very much disliked. The fact that the windows could not be personally cleaned by the residents themselves was very much disliked, since this obscured both the amount of light and the view.

"I wanted to ask you what you liked about living in Peabody Terrace?

Well, I personally like modern-type structures as opposed to the old-fashioned kind, just because I've come from Los Angeles which is so modern a city, and so I am used to living in a place with a lot of glass, so you have a lot of sunlight coming in.

What are the most important things that you like about the apartment?

The windows. We have really always enjoyed the windows. Because of the view and the light?

Well, it opens the apartment up so much. I have been in apartments which are the same size as this one, but they look so much smaller because they don't have the big window space. It adds an awful lot of feeling of space." Westgate

"Is there anything right about this living room?

It's quite light...there are a lot of windows which is nice, in a way, although we've got nothing to look on. But it does mean that when it's a dull day, we do get a bit of light. In summer, we get too much...it gets too hot!" Eastgate

"-I love the windows, the brightness. I'll miss that."
Westgate

"One thing I really like, is that the apartment is
light and airy--terribly nice, that--a great advantage."
Westgate

"Well, I like the big windows, I am very happy about
them."
Peabody

"I loved the big windows immediately." Eastgate

"Let me go back to the apartment--what about the living
room, the shape and the size of the living room? Is there any-
thing you like about it or dislike?
I like the windows. I like the windows in all the rooms.
Because there's a lot of light?
Yes, I just like windows--I like to be able to see out.
I don't have to turn the lights on too much."
Peabody

Balconies

Most women wanted a balcony if they did not have one and many would choose to use any additional space they could add onto the apartment for this purpose. The balcony is used as a playspace for a small child relieving the parent of having to take the child downstairs and outside to play. The balcony can be used for children to play with water or paint without messing the apartment. The balcony fence or enclosure must be childproof, i.e., a small child must not be able to fall out by climbing up the fence and leaning over the top. The Peabody apartments that have the sunscreen above the fence prevent this danger. The balcony is very much appreciated by parents for cookouts, sitting outside and providing additional storage space for large toys and other items. The balcony is used for repotting plants, painting furniture, airing bedding and growing plants and flowers.

In Peabody Terrace, balconies of adjacent apartments can be connected by residents' mutual agreement to open the dividing wooden fire doors. This makes a wonderful play space for neighboring children as well as adult socializing and cookouts. The balconies open off both the livingrooms and bedrooms running the full length of the apartments. This also enables the residents to clean their own windows. Some of the apartments have a tiny balcony of only 2'6" deep and wide. This was intended as a fire escape, but some people use it to cook out, though it is really too small for anything else.





Balconies

Westgate Lowrise
A place to sit out
with father while he
reads in the spring
sun.



A place from which to
watch friends climbing
trees.





Balconies

Places for children to play, growing plants, barbequing, storing bulky items, repotting plants, sitting out, etc.



Floor to ceiling window walls with opaque opening sections for ventilation and clear glass for view.

Peabody

Adjacent apartments can connect their balconies making a large play-space.



"What about a balcony?

Yes, for the children--especially if you have a young one, so you don't have to be out in the playground all the time, but that they can play there and be getting some sunlight. In the summer, you feel guilty to clean your home; because it means you are depriving the children of being outside, especially if you are on the 5th floor. You can't send your child out alone, because you couldn't really see him and couldn't get down there in time. The balcony is inside and yet outside." Westgate

"In the summer, we use the balcony quite a bit. I put a tub of water out there and they can play in it, take off their clothes and they can play anyway they want in it; and also I put their painting out; I put out a big board and they can paint and they can be much messier than they can be in the winter in here when they have to use this table in the kitchen. I feel that it's fairly safe, I wouldn't want to have the climbing tower out there, though, because they could fall over the edge! Annie--she might be able to climb up that fence on the balcony even without the tower because we took off our sunscreens, but I hope she won't". Peabody

Floor

In all 3 buildings the floor finish is white or light grey linoleum tiles placed on the concrete slab. This colour and material is very impractical for families with young children, since dirt shows up very easily. Linoleum flooring is also difficult to clean, especially when it is old and becomes porous. Constant waxing and polishing is both very expensive and time-consuming for a housewife or student husband to have to do. The very hard surface is dangerous for small children to fall on and most student families cannot afford the cost of carpeting the entire apartment. In addition, the grey or white colour is found to be very drab.

"I dislike the floor--it's 'blah', it's very hard to keep clean, it picks up dust very easily. Like I swept it yesterday and you wouldn't know it because the dust just picks up."
Westgate

"It's also a very drab colour--not much you can do with it. And you really need to wax it all the time, to keep it clean, what an expense! You move a chair, it scratches!" Westgate

"For instance, take the floor, it is bloody awful, white lino is impossible to keep clean. It's the most stupid thing to have in a building with children. It just seems to say, 'ah, dirt'--you know, things really stick to it, and every little bit of dirt shows. They could have carpeted it, it would have been very nice. You know, I don't know if cheap carpeting would have been any more expensive than this flooring and it would certainly be easier to clean. And I don't know; just a little bit of imagination. That's all, or just a little bit of something!" Eastgate

"The linoleum on the floor is so old, and porous, it can't be cleaned." Westgate

"In addition, having the concrete floors, if you have a child, you worry about them falling. When we bought this carpet, we didn't have a lot of money and we didn't buy a pad for it, and the floors need a pad. And the children's room, you are faced with whether you are going to put a rug down and have to vacuum or worry about the dust floating around. You have to worry about dust with wood, but you still worry more here about them falling out of cribs; and us conking our heads on the ceilings!" Peabody

Families with young children have a lot of large bulky items such as carriages, cribs, strollers, bicycles, packing trunks, toys, etc. for which they need different kinds of storage. The storage needed ranges from long term infrequently needed items to daily access. Large, communal storage lockers in basements are unsafe if everyone in the building has a key. This kind of storage works better if residents have to sign out the key whenever they want to retrieve something. Storage for large items located in large, built-in lockers in the corridors works better in terms of safety and they are more accessible. The apartment needs low, open shelves for children's toys at children's reach, and higher shelves and drawers for items that children should not reach. In a small apartment, adequate storage is really important in every room so as not to develop chaotic clutter and piles of boxes and crates everywhere. The Peabody apartment has built in storage in every room; kitchen has closets and a pantry, bathroom has open shelves, corridor has a large closed closet, bedrooms have built-in shelves, drawers and desk top. The Westgate apartments on the other hand only have limited closets in the kitchen and no other built-in closet space. They do have a convenient storage locker in the hallway on each floor.



Storage Peabody
All rooms have built-in closets and shelves and window-desk or shelf.

Note the diaper changing table and storage units.



"What about storage?

There are different types of storage facilities in the basement and there is a waiting list, to get on the private storage, of a couple of years; and then they have these huge fenced-in areas where a lot of people keep their things. But the reports I hear, are that sometimes things leak out and disappear because people have a common entry key and can go and take anything out and things disappear. In this building entrance they have a carriage room, so you can keep carriages and tricycles just off the entrance lobby; but I don't keep anything down there, because things are missing from there too. It would be nice in a way, if people could have individual private storage, which could be on your floor so that if somebody wanted to take something, they would have to make more of an effort, whereas down there, the temptation is right there, the main door is open and you can take anything easily.

And within the apartment, storage?

I think it's adequate; I mean all of this wall is storage space. We had a lot more things than most people, because we were a working couple before we came here--most people are just starting out, which means they have plenty of storage space. They even get freezers and keep them in this big closet. So I don't have any complaints.

And the children's room?

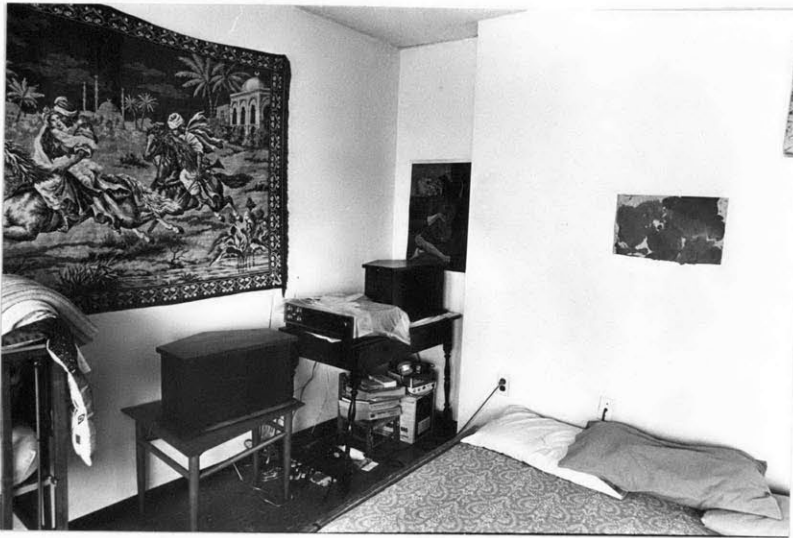
Believe it or not, it is the exact same size as the main one. They also have the shelves built-in, but I almost wish there were some closed drawers rather than open shelves. To try and keep clothes nicely arranged on a shelf is hard. And the shelves go right up to the ceiling, and I can't really use the top shelves anyway." Peabody



Storage. Westgate Lowrise (above left) Peabody (above right) and Westgate Highrise (below)

Families with young children accumulate large items which need to be stored close to the unit for safety. The storage locker in the hallway is a good idea in the Westgate highrise.





Storage in Westgate

Lack of built-in closets inside the apartment makes it difficult to keep uncluttered.



The colour of the environment was mentioned frequently. Bright, light colours are preferred to dull, monotonous ones. A repeated comment was in connection with the dislike of depressing grey "unfinished" concrete which looks particularly bad on dull days, and also when it is wet. Warm, red or yellow bricks are preferred materials to concrete finishes. The colour of the environment is also felt to be a function of the amount of vegetation and greenness around. In winter, there are few evergreen plants and generally little green or signs of living growth, and this was depressing and very much disliked.

The all-white apartments are also disliked and the one solid coloured wall and coloured ventilators in the Peabody apartments is much appreciated for the warmth it adds to the livingroom. The fact that the hallways on every floor are the same color is also very much disliked, since there is nothing by which you can identify your floor. A number of different colours were used in Eastgate (± 6); alternate floors were painted in 6 colours, but in a 28 story building this was not found to be enough differentiation. The dark grey carpets and blue brick walls in the Peabody hallways were found to be cold and sterile and similarly the grey linoleum floors and white walls in Westgate. In Eastgate there are very subtle tonal differences in the one solid colour on the floors and doors, but this slight tonal difference was too subtle to look anything but the same, unless you scrutinized it very closely.

"What about the aesthetic appearance of Peabody Terrace?

There isn't much to look at outside. During the winter, there is nothing there--no trees--they cut the ones down on Memorial Drive. There are no flowers, I don't see any at all. The grass is kept up very well in summer, but that's all, nothing beautiful. The apartments look like a beehive, unattractive. This building's overall basic colour is grey--then they put a little bit of green and red around, which doesn't add enough at all. Brighter colours--maybe even a white building--more cheerful would be nicer--there are a lot of other concrete buildings even more attractive than this one. Even Westgate is more attractive. I used to have friends there. The environment here is grey and sterile. I hear they got an award for this building; is it because they saved a lot of money?"

Peabody

"Everything is white here. That's another thing I don't like, is the pale, white walls. Friends that moved us in, kind of walked in and it was so white when the apartment was empty--white walls, white floors, white curtains and the kitchen all white and the bathroom and it was really awful. You are not supposed to put holes in the walls, and we have had to, to hang a few pictures, just for our sanity. It's very functional, but very cold."

Eastgate

"The space is so dull. Maybe, if there were coloured curtains, it would feel better, but I don't know. It's just sterile and I don't know if you could do anything to it that would make it feel less sterile.

You mean it's dull and grey?

It's not even dull; it's plastic; it's sterile and you know this is sterile; this whole building, the whole area, is just sterile. It's not a human area...

Do you think that it's the materials and the colour partially?

It's concrete, it's the colour, I mean, there's no colour, it's just grey."

Eastgate

"Well, what are the things that you like about your apartment?

The color is nice, at least.

The white?

Well, they have this one colored wall here, but at least everything else is white, so it does have a feeling of space, probably. And usually you can work around whatever the one solid color is. Some of the apartments do not have a solid

color wall, but I sort of like the coloured wall. I think that from the apartments I have been in (perhaps its the way they have been decorated) that the colour seems to add more warmth."
Peabody

"A lot of people are bothered by the grey sky, grey concrete, and grey ground?

Well, see, I don't go outside that much, so it doesn't really bother me. I don't see it that much actually. We park in the garage--I usually just look straight ahead--the city is all the same to me. Once I get inside, I look around. When I saw it for the first time, I thought it was quite attractive. The building out in the suburb was nicer, red brick with nice balconies and all, but here I am happy in the inside and I don't pay too much attention to the outside." Eastgate

"What other materials do you prefer to concrete?

I wouldn't think that for this kind of structure there could be an alternative, I don't know, it's kind of a cold sort of colour, it's not anything you could be attracted to in particular, except that it's so workable and I think the use of the green and the red really helps a lot." Peabody

The squareness and boxiness of the apartments, especially in Eastgate and Westgate, were disliked. They felt them to be too regular and sterile. There are no interesting little corners, windowseats, bay windows, surprises or curves. The people felt that they had not been built with craftsmanship and care. There is no beauty in them; they are merely functional or utilitarian, but not aesthetically satisfying. The very large livingroom space in Westgate with many alternate furniture arrangements was liked. The low (7'6") ceilings in Peabody Terrace were disliked.

"But, I mean, also the building itself, the way it's placed on the site...I don't feel "Oh, I'm home," I feel "Oh, Christ!"

The shape of the building?

Yes, I mean, you come home in the evening and you sort of look up at this...this...stupid, tall, long thing."

Eastgate

"I found the structures very boring. After a few months of settling in it started becoming a very routine environment. It seems very cold, sterile and it seems very dormitory-like."

Westgate

"Well, you know the apartments are pleasant, they're functional--you really know they're indestructible, because everything is concrete; and that's one of the things I don't like about it. You can look at it 2 ways--it lacks something..."

You mean, do you feel you can't do things to it? Why do you feel it's indestructible?

Well, it sort of lacks something. For instance, not to be able to see where the squares are joined in the ceiling; also, in some of the walls, you can see the bubbles, holes, like in them, just sort of put up there, and this doesn't really give you the feeling of plushness; you get more of a project, lower income housing development type of feeling, with the walls."

Peabody

"Yes. You know, I can't sort of sit here and feel anything. I like little interesting corners where I can sort of snuggle up and I sit on the floor and that makes me feel a little bit nice. When I want to be on my own, I like to snuggle up somewhere and a little corner would be lovely, a window seat...just that would be lovely. Actually, if they just maybe put a window here. A window box would be lovely too, maybe just to grow flowers in." Eastgate

"Do you think that the shape of this room is wrong? I don't know, something curved, if there was something curved or a little sort of hidden corner or a little something interesting in it. It's a dead room, and this is where we live all the time. Being in a 1 bedroom apartment--this is where we live, and it's dead; there's just nothing interesting or exciting about it." Eastgate

"You say you like the architecture, the way it looks--the shapes of the buildings?

Yes, the shapes, the colours, the way the balconies are; I've always liked the way it looked from a distance." Peabody

"And the apartments on Beacon Hill are old and have a lot of curves and irregularities?

They are very artistic. They were done by craftsmen. This apartment building is not, I don't know who built it, but it was certainly not done by craftsmen. There was no love put in to it, no beauty. It's a functioning environment, rather than a functioning and creative environment! It's very sterile and it's so badly put together that it's not really even a good functioning environment. Some contemporary homes or apartments that are built really well are utilitarian, but this one, not." Westgate

"They looked at first impressive, nice, clean and neat and sterile. People come to visit and are very impressed with it at first.

What do you feel about it?

I think I see deeper than the first impressions." Westgate

The sameness of the apartments as they appeared on the facades of the buildings and on their insides was very much disliked. The buildings were felt to be cold and sterile. The words "dead", "cold", and "sterile" are repeatedly mentioned. People expressed the feeling that both the apartment and apartment building did not feel like "home". The lack of opportunities in the apartments for self-expression and identity were frequently mentioned, most frequently in Eastgate. There is a greater variety of apartment types in Peabody Terrace and also much greater variation on the facades, which might account for less of a feeling of being "in a little box inside a bigger box". Westgate was found to be "a very boring structure" after a short while, whereas the shapes of the Peabody buildings were mentioned as being "interesting". The fact that the Peabody apartment walls and ceilings were of white-painted, off-shutter concrete was extremely disliked, since the holes and imperfections could be seen, and the overall feeling was cold and hard. Also, this hard surface meant that you could not put anything up on the walls easily. Everyone disliked the fact that they were not supposed to hang things on the white walls. Some people drilled holes in the walls anyway and said they would fill in the holes when they left, but felt guilty. When asked what they now felt about concrete finishes inside apartments, William Lundemulder of Sert, Jackson and Gowley, said that they do not specify them anymore in residential

buildings. They finish the walls and ceilings with plaster, plasterboard or an equivalent. He mentioned that in their own offices, the walls used to have off-shutter concrete finishes; they decided it was too cold and boring, and covered them over. They felt that if they themselves did not like it, neither would other people.

"What is most important that you dislike about living here? Is there anything other than Aaron's play, or is that the most important?"

It sort of lacks any kind of self-expression, I think, both in the apartment and in the playground. You know, it took forever to get the fence up because the architect and manager found it unaesthetic! You put a tire up so that the kids can swing on it, and they take it down. So you can't do anything, it seems. You can't put anything up on the walls. In the playground you can't do anything, except with what is already there. Like the kids start digging and they get yelled at. They are not supposed to do that--the grass has to be in such and such a way. So I think that the lack of self expression is terrible." Westgate

"What about you apartment, anything you dislike?"

My apartment is very impersonal--everything is white and like, you know; concrete walls and everything is square. The curtains are white cotton. It's not a homely feeling." Peabody

The double-loaded corridors and elevators in Eastgate and Westgate are usually filled with stale cooking smells. People say that if someone is baking bread it is not as bad as when there are smells of burning bacon fat, etc. The reason for the smells in the corridor is the poor ventilation system in the kitchens, which of course have no external vents. Often the extractors actually blow foul-smelling air into the apartments rather than sucking air out. Besides the kitchen not having natural ventilation, the rest of the apartment does not have cross ventilation so it is usually necessary to own an air conditioner to get rid of stale air. None of these problems occur in the Peabody Terrace apartments because of the naturally ventilated kitchens and windows at opposite ends of the apartments.

"They have I don't know what sort of a ventilating system but when someone's cooking something pleasant on the floor it's really pleasant, but when they're cooking something that you don't like, all the smells just go right through. I mean the system is supposed to suck the air out, but we just get the air in and we even get cooking smells in the bathroom. I don't know how it works, but it's really not pleasant and it travels into the rest of our space." Eastgate

"The vent system in the kitchen brings in a lot of dust because our vent goes into the incinerator room and it is full of smoke and stuff. So, whenever the incinerator goes out there, it comes blowing in here. So, everyday, you have so much dusting to do and doing the floor again." Westgate

"The ventilator doesn't work and the grease permeates the whole apartment, since the vent in the bathroom is strong and draws the grease right through all the rooms." Westgate

"The corridors, also, the whole thing. When someone is baking bread, it's lovely, in the morning when you wake up and someone is cooking bacon, which you don't particularly feel like, it's not very pleasant.

Can you ventilate the apartment by opening the windows?

It depends on the wind. You open the window and you get the roar of the traffic jam during the week and sometimes when you want ventilation and you open this window and the bedroom window, you get a nice sort of ventilation, but sometimes everything is just blown about and if it's windy, it just goes mad in here." Eastgate

Noise

Eastgate is located on a very noisy traffic circle called Kendall Square. Three sides of the building receive the full blast of the constant traffic noise. This inhibits people from opening windows for fresh air and caused a couple of the respondents to install air conditioners. Westgate and Peabody are in quieter areas, in both cases, the towers being set back from busy motorways. The Eastgate and Westgate corridors carried voices and conversations from the apartments which made people feel a certain lack of privacy. In Peabody there are no doorways or windows opening directly onto corridors, which are as a result, quiet. In Westgate bathrooms of one apartment are next to bathrooms of another, carrying sounds across from one to the other.

"We have the choice in our apartment of noise or ventilation when we open windows." Eastgate

"But, when you open it, it is a hurricane often and you can't really leave it open. The bedroom doesn't get much ventilation at all." Eastgate

"Noise is still terrible there, even though it's so high. They sent a cassette tape home of baby Adam at his birthday and her mother wrote and said, "Good God, I thought you were living on the 23rd floor! What's all the traffic noise?" And you know, it's from Memorial Drive! So, it's also noisy up there on that side, but at least they have a pleasant view." Eastgate

"The other thing that's very important, is that because the bedroom is in the back, it's right over the main entry door so it's very hard on the children, because they are always disturbed, when they've just fallen asleep; the door squeaking, opening and closing when people are coming in at night; the front door is always opening and closing, and sometimes they wake up screaming because of the noise." Peabody

"Does the wind make a noise?"

Yes, it howls often, it's awful.

So the spaces at the bottom of the building, you can't really sit there?

Well, the noise mainly. I don't know, given this site, why they couldn't have just built a wall--a high, nice high wall, with a creeper or something, just blocking off Kendall Square traffic?" Eastgate

Heat

All 3 buildings have centrally regulated heating and there is a lot of discomfort and complaint about this. The major complaint was of too much heat. In Peabody Terrace the fact that the windows can be opened for cross ventilation reduces the heat to some extent. In the summer the Peabody apartments are oriented so they pick up the cooling river breezes.

"During the summer, it was unbearable here, even though we had the air conditioner--we sat in this room all day. In winter inside we wear summer clothes. The heating system doesn't work very well, 'cause you're always complaining... I mean the manager either gets complaints that it's too hot and other people say it's too cold. If each apartment could control it's own heat it really would be a help, because people like different degrees of heat--different cultures, for instance." Eastgate

"So you do get light, but not sun.
And it's not really warm or cheerful?
Well, these apartments have always been warm, extremely warm!

Even though you don't get the direct sun; is it the heating?

Oh yeah, if you get the sun it's even worse. I don't know if you've glanced downstairs in the entrance, but there is a sign there which says that they're doing a temperature evaluation of the building, and they found that at about 8:30 in the evening, it's about 85° in the apartments and that's with the windows open. So, it's quite warm in the building! So, at night, you dry up and get very congested because it's so dry and hot." Westgate

"And what about the heating?
Oh, that's impossible. The poor manager, I feel so sorry for him.

Why?
Well, it's too hot, it really is and it gets terribly stuffy. And you try and open the windows and you get a draught. I mean, look at what the baby is wearing now." Westgate

"Oh, this is what I really want to tell you about. The heating. You cannot control the heating. It is centrally controlled. And with the energy crisis they went through a whole thing--it was either too hot or too cold. I never had a thermometer, but I am sure the variations were at least 20 degrees. Supposedly you can open the ventilating windows to get cross ventilation, but then you sometimes get a draught. So you are constantly jumping up and down opening and closing vents. In summer it can be pleasant when you get the breezes. We're down so low and we're partially blocked by that building opposite so sometimes we don't get the breezes from the river though the higher apartments do.

Do you have an air conditioner?

No, it's not too terribly bad, if there is a breeze."

Peabody